The Northeast District

Universal Fellowship Of Metropolitan Community Churches

62 Berkeley Place
Brooklyn, New York 11217
April 13, 1977

Dear Applicant:

Enclosed you will find your application for the coming year. I am sorry that they could not be forwarded to you earlier, however I only received them from the Fellowship this week.

The District Credentials Review Committee shall meet with all applicants on Friday, May 20. I shall be forwarding a schedule to you around the 1st of May. Please send your material to the following members of the Committee as soon as possible:

Rev. Roy Birchard
945 "G" Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Rev. Donald Borbe
Post Office Box 8174
Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania 19101

Rev. F. Jay Deacon
11 Amity Street
Hartford,
Connecticut 06106

Rev. Michael England
945 "G" Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Rev. Howard J. Gaass
62 Berkeley Place
Brooklyn,
New York 11217

Rev. Stan Harris
Post Office Box 1145
Baltimore,
Maryland 21203

Rev. Edward T. Hougen
131 Cambridge Street
Boston,
Massachusetts 02114

Rev. Gilbert H. Lincoln
Post Office Box 1757, GPO
New York,
New York 10001

Rev. Jose L. Mojica
Post Office Box 110
New York,
New York 10009

Rev. Larry J. Uhrig
945 "G" Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

If there are any questions, please drop me a line.

Check Scott.

Sincerely,

Rev. Howard J. Gaass

THE WIDER PLACE by Eugenia Price

For 10 weeks this winter I sat in a Christian ethics course at an extremely fundamentalist church. I listened as over and over again what "ought" to be was presented as Christian Ethics. I found myself back in the old way of thinking about Christianity, and how little help it was in the really deep decisions of life -- questions like whether to turn off the heart-lung machine on a hopelessly comatose patient; whether to have or not have an abortion when one already had more children than could easily be supported -- or because the child was illegitimate, of a different race, and possibly deformed if one had been taking drugs; or was the product of rape or incest; whether to engage in a loving homosexual relationship or remain in a hopelessly unhappy marriage. These weren't just ethical problems in a vacuum, but in the world we live in real, live problems that good people, who sincerely were trying to find a Christian way in today's society were facing. The course was no help.

Eugenia Price's book, The Wider Place, opens Christian Ethics to just that -- a wider place where love, concern, and freedom to love and believe in a loving God who cares deeply about people is possible. Ms. Price is considered by Fundamentalists to be one of them, and writes fine Christian living books, which try to illuminate the Christian life and bring air into a stultifying religiosity. She succeeds admirably in making it possible to believe in the scripture but not be hamstrung by them. Her Wider Place is especially cogent when it is talking about freedom -- and the right to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit, even if it goes against what we have been told is scriptural, because a free God has the right and even need to lead us to a freer place in our lives. This is an excellent book for gays who are trying to open their lives to God, but who fear that Christianity will oppress them as they have been oppressed in the past. Price proves that good Christians need not be narrow people.

THE WIDER PLACE by Eugenia Price

For 10 weeks this winter I met in a Christian ethics course at an extremely fundamentalist church. I listened as over and over again what "ought" to be was presented as Christian ethics. I found myself back in the old way of thinking about Christianity, and how little really it was in the really deep questions of life -- questions like whether to turn off the coming-long radios on a hospitalized cancerous patient, whether to have or not have an abortion when one already had some children and could easily be somewhat or because the child was illegitimate, of a different race, and absolutely unwanted if she had been taking drugs or was the product of rape or incest, whether to engage in a loving, responsible relationship or remain in a meaningless unhappy marriage. These women's just ordinary problems in a varied, but in the world we live in real, life problems. Not good doodoo, who sincerely was trying to find a Christian way in society's constantly wavering feeling. The church was no help.

Eugenia Price's book, The Wider Place, opens Christian ethics to just that -- a wider place where love, concern, and freedom to love and believe in a loving God who cares deeply about people is possible. Mr. Price is concerned by fundamentalists to be one of them, but writes this Christian living book which try to illuminate the Christian life and bring it into a wider, more realistic way. She succeeds admirably in making it possible to believe in the scriptures but not be bound to them. Her wider place is especially evident when it is talking about freedom -- and the right to be free to the leading of the holy spirit. Even if it has qualities that we have been told is sentimental, reading a book that has the vigor and excitement to lead us to see Jesus alive in our lives. This is an excellent book for people who are trying to commit their lives to God, but who fear this Christianity will impinge their so they have been open in the past. Price proves that good Christians need not be narrow people.

In conjunction with Ms. Price's book, a text "Faith and Freedom", which prints the proceedings of the Meeting of the Society for Evangelical Ethics, held in Germany in 1973, as well as reprinting some other materials concerning evangelical ethics, seems to be written in the same spirit as Eugenia Price's book. A particularly exciting chapter by one John McKenzie on freedom and a free God was an interesting companion to the Price book, as was a quotation from Karl Barth on the task of the ethicist. Barth holds that ethics must help people make decisions, or they will reject the ethic involved, and the ethicist will have been of no value at all.

A third book, again a text, Ethics, Issues and Alternatives, which was the textbook for the course, speaks of hierarchies of ethical choice, and puts the loving, caring, concerned choice at the top of the heap. This author does a valuable service in delineating the various types of Christian ethical viewpoints, and while steering away from mere "situational ethics" gives some overall guidelines for making ethical choices.

All three were excellent books: Eugenia Price's was particularly valuable since it is one that can be read by clergy and not be overly simple to be valuable, yet it can be highly recommended to our lay people. Ms. Price has agreed to be on the advisory committee for Evangelicals Concerned for Gay People, and her book is a fine example of what can be expected from her as an advisor to gays. She understands that goodness need not be sanctimonious. Faith and Freedom, while in places overly difficult to read and understand (oh, those German theologians!) and too often unbelievably sexist (one paragraph of 10 lines had 23 references to man, men, and mankind as well as 8 to God as father) still was valuable reading. The third was a basic text, and valuable as such. It's one 1/2 page reference to homosexuality was traditional Christian sexual ethics, but there was no heavy condemnation. It's a good basic text for a church discussion of Christian ethics, since it is understandable by lay people, and yet does a good job of laying out the material. It would be a good text for exhorters and deacons to read.

In conjunction with Ms. Price's book, a text, Faith and Freedom, which prints the proceedings of the Meeting of the Society for Evangelical Ethics, held in Germany in 1973, as well as reprinting some other materials concerning evangelical ethics, seems to be written in the same spirit as Dorothy Price's book. A particularly exciting chapter by one John McKenzie on freedom and a free God was an interesting companion to the Price book, as was a meditation from Karl Barth on the task of the ethicist. Barth notes that ethics must help people make decisions, or they will reduce the ethic involved, and the ethicist will have been of no value at all.

A third book, again a text, Ethics: Issues and Alternatives, which was the textbook for the course, speaks of alternatives of ethical choice, and puts the Loving, caring, calculated choice at the top of the lean. This author does a valuable service in delineating the various types of Christian ethical viewpoints, and while steering away from mere "situational ethics" gives some overall guidelines for making ethical choices.

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Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

APPLICATION FOR LICENSE AS A MINISTER

DATE: _____, 197__

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ ZIP: _____

1. Indicate the local MCC congregation (Chartered Church) in which you hold official membership:

   MCC- _____ For how long? _____

2. Indicate the positions or offices held and committees or activities in which you have participated in MCC:

   _____ Dates: _____

   _____ Dates: _____

   _____ Dates: _____

3. List below all schools attended

EDUCATION	Name and Location of School	No. of Years Attended	Course of Study General	Course of Study Special	Did you Graduate?	Date of Leaving Mo.	Date of Leaving Yr.
Grammar School							
High School							
Night School							
Correspondence Sch.							
College or University							

4. Provide below your Employment Record for the past 5 years (List last employer first)

Employers Name and Address	Kind of Work	Weekly Wage	Started	Left	Reason

UFMCC FORM 74005-1

ADDITIONAL REMARKS MAY BE INCLUDED ON REVERSE OF SHEET

5. What was your religious or church affiliation prior to your membership in MCC?_____

For how many years?_____
If you have discontinued that association, when did you do so?_____

Why?_____

6. In your previous church affiliation, were you engaged in any type of Christian ministry, service or activity?_____ If so, what?_____

_____

_____

7. Do you now hold any position or credentials with any other religious denomination or body?_____ If so, Position:_____

Name of body:_____

8. If Item 7, above, is "Yes", would you be willing to disassociate yourself from that denomination or body upon being licensed as a minister in UFMCC?_____ If not, why not?_____

_____

9. Cite the circumstances or situations confirming and supporting your decision to dedicate your life to the professional Christian ministry in UFMCC._____

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you believe your commitment to include a full-time ministry?_____

If not, then to what extent?_____

11. What talents do you feel you can offer to further the goals of the UFMCC ministry?_____

_____

12. Have you studied the By-Laws of UFMCC?_____

13. Are you in agreement with the statement of faith adopted by the General Conference of UFMCC as stated in the Fellowship By-Laws?_____

14. Would you teach/preach any additional scriptural truth as a doctrine of UFMCC and/or require its acceptance before receiving an individual into membership of the Church or to administer the Sacraments and Rites of the Church to an individual?_____
(If "Yes", explain briefly on the back of this sheet or on another sheet of paper attached to this application.)

15. Explain briefly your understanding of the Sacraments and their observance in the local Church._____

_____

_____

_____

16. Do you endeavor at each appropriate opportunity to testify of the Christ and to regularly devote time to Bible study, prayer & meditation?_____

17. Do you recognize and accept the responsibility to set an example before others in all aspects of Christian living?_____

18. Do you support efforts in the area of social justice (especially with reference to obtaining human rights for gay people) that are pursued within the framework of our Fellowship By-Laws and the traditions of non-violence?_____

19. Do you tithe to your local MCC congregation?_____

20. Are you prepared to move to another geographical location, if needed, in order to serve in the ministry of UFMCC?_____

    If not, why?_____

21. Will you endeavor to support the international programs and decisions of the UFMCC as adopted and authorized by the General Conferences and implemented by its elected representatives?_____

I affirm that the above statements are true. I have read and understand the "Requirements for Professional Ministers" (UFMCC Form 75001).

Signed:_____

TRANSCRIPTS OF COLLEGE CREDITS MUST BE PROVIDED. ATTACH ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT WILL SUPPORT YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AS A UFMCC MINISTER (SUCH AS REPRODUCTIONS OF DEGREES, CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, ETC). SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION TO THE PASTOR OF YOUR LOCAL CHARTERED MCC.

DO NOT RETURN TO APPLICANT**CONFIDENTIAL**MAKE NO PROMISES TO APPLICANT

LOCAL CHURCH ACTION:

PASTOR RECOMMENDATION: ( )YES ( )NO Signed:_____

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: With a full board of ____ persons, a total of ____ have voted to recommend this request for license.

Date:_____ Signed:_____, Church Clerk

FORWARD APPLICATION & ATTACHMENTS TO LOCAL DISTRICT COORDINATOR

DISTRICT ACTION: (Note: All material must be in the UFMCC office no later than June 15th)

DISTRICT COORDINATOR RECOMMENDATION: ( )YES ( )NO

DISTRICT CREDENTIALS REVIEW COMMITTEE (Consisting of District Coordinator as chairperson, all senior pastors of Chartered Churches, and all Ordained Ministers residing in the district): With a full committee of _____ UFMCC ministers, a total of _____ have voted to recommend the granting of a UFMCC license as requested. ***

Date:_____ Signed:_____, District Coordinator

NOTIFY CANDIDATE THAT HE/SHE (HAS)(HAS NOT) BEEN RECOMMENDED TO BE LICENSED BY UFMCC. IF NOT RECOMMENDED, GIVE SPECIFIC REASONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER PREPARATION. FORWARD APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS TO THE MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS AND AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICES OF UFMCC. IF THE ANSWER TO ITEM 7 IS "YES", SEND APPLICATION TO BOARD OF ELDERS.

UFMCC ACTION: ( )LICENSE GRANTED ( )LICENSE NOT GRANTED

Date:_____ Signed:_____

RETURN APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS TO UFMCC FILES IN EXECUTIVE OFFICES.

*** If there are abstentions, the reasons for them must be recorded and sent along with this application.

UFMCC FORM 74005-3*

STATEMENT OF FAITH AND CALL

Marjorie F. Ragona

Probably the most difficult thing to put in writing is what one believes, because very often beliefs -- particularly religious or political -- are almost non-verbal. One believes with one's spirit almost without thinking, and accepts many beliefs without trying to express them verbally. This is particularly true if those beliefs have existed from very early childhood and are part of one's emotional being.

I have never had to say, "I believe in God," or "I believe in Christ." There has been no either/or. Both are accepted without there being any alternative. God has been there all along. It is I who has been in touch or out of touch with God.

For this reason, and because I think it will help to explain some of the other things which prompt questions as to why I behave as I do, that it will be better to start this answer as a simple biographical sketch.

My earliest childhood was spent in a series of foster homes and children's institutions. Realize that I was born in 1929 at the beginning of the Great Depression. My parents divorced in 1930, and because my father was given custody of three children, one recovering from a serious bout with poliomyelitis, and had no resources for hiring care, I -- at 10 months of age -- was placed in a foster home. My brothers were institutionalized and I did not see them, except for rare holidays, until I was five. At four, I was sent to the Gould Foundation, a pre-adoption center; and at five I was placed in the Woodycrest Children's Home, joining my eight year old brother. Woodycrest

was a Christian-sponsored institution. I learned to read by sounding out the verses printed on "Bible cards" handed out in Methodist Sunday School. I went to sleep with fifty other youngsters in a dormitory to the sound of a loudspeaker playing "Day is Dying in the West," and awoke to that same loudspeaker playing "When Morning Gilds the Skies."

Since I had never experienced living with my own parents, I had been carefully raised on the idea that God was our father -- and I suppose I took it almost literally. I knew no other. Christ was the beautiful figure on the refectory wall, holding out his arms to the multi-colored bevy of children. He wanted us if no one else did.

At eight, I went to my father's wedding, and after that found myself living at home, being raised by a sternly Calvinist father and a dour Welsh Presbyterian stepmother. God, at that point, became a fearsome, punitive, eternal watcher who knew all, saw all, and promptly told my father. My father was the Methodist-trained assistant pastor in a Dutch Reformed Church -- and God's special messenger, who was to be enormously respected and fully feared. My stepmother's God was a severe and demanding judge, whom one did not disobey for fear of lasting damnation. I was early indoctrinated into the idea that one was permanently, totally lost and saved only if one were part of the elect. I was convinced very young, alas, that I was not and would never be -- nor could I be -- and was thoroughly doomed.

I ran away from home at thirteen, following rape by my sixteen year old brother and his best friend. Somehow, like many women in the same situation, I felt it was my fault, and I was afraid to tell my father. I remained on the streets and in the subways of New York -- a juvenile street person -- for nearly five months. At the end of that time I turned myself in to the missing persons bureau, and was sent to Juvenile Court.

was a Christian-sponsored institution. I learned to read by spelling out the verses printed on "bible cards" handed out in Methodist Sunday school. I went to sleep with fifty other youngsters in a dormitory to the sound of a lonely Canadian singing "Joy is flying in the West," and awoke to that same Independent singing "When Morning Gilds the Skies."

Since I had never experienced living with my own parents, I had been carefully raised on the idea that Dad was out "there" -- and I supposed I took it almost literally. I knew no "dads" like this, was the beautiful figure on the refectory wall, holding out his arms to the multi-colored baby of children. He wanted us if we only did.

At night, I went to my father's wedding, and after that found myself living at home, being raised by a saintly Christian father and a fine Christian housekeeper-stepmother. Dad, at that point, became a fascinating, sometimes-absent weekend visitor who loved all, very all, and unwearily told my fortune. My father was the Methodist-trained assistant pastor in a Quaker Meeting House -- and God's special messenger, who was to be unconditionally responsive and fully trusted. My stepmother's God was a severe and demanding Judge, who was ever ready for Dad's disaster for Dad's disobedience. I was early indoctrinated in the idea that one was mortalmentally, totally lost and saved only if one knew every of the rules. I was convinced very young, alas, that I was not and would never be -- not could I be -- and was thoroughly doomed.

I ran away from home at thirteen, following rows by my stepmother and his best friend. Somehow, like many years in the future situation, I felt I was my mother, and I was offered to "stay home." I ran away to the streets and in the subways of New York -- to reality almost never -- for nearly five months. In the end-of-year exams I topped everybody in the entire eighth grade, and was sent to Haverhill, Ohio.

The children's court was presided over by an understanding woman judge, Justine Wise Polier -- the daughter of Rabbi Stephen Wise, one the great liberal rabbis of the 1930's and 40's. Judge Polier felt that I needed to be taken away from the rigid atmosphere in which I was being raised and allowed a gentler and freer surrounding; she also felt that the religious indoctrination I was receiving was detrimental to my mental health. For the next three years I was surrounded by exuberant Reformed Judaism at the Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls School, a facility run by the Jewish Board of Guardians. I was the only Christian child in the school.* On Sundays, I attended the Lutheran Church at Hawthorne, New York and was received as a communicant there. Some of the high spots of those years were the religious raps between the girls at Cedar Knolls and our young rabbi with the young minister of the Lutheran Church. During those years I was awarded a scholarship to Briarcliff High School and later Briarcliff Junior College (since I was too young at High School graduation to be released from Hawthorne.)

At fifteen, during a vacation at home, I was told by my stepmother (a registered nurse) that there was something "unnatural" about my relationships with women. I had as yet had no homosexual experience. Two years later, my father turned me out of the house (following my release from Hawthorne) because of my "morals" -- I had by then discovered my sexual attraction to women. He and I quarrelled on the steps of the Marble Collegiate Church with me calling him a hypocrite, forever talking about the love of God and showing none. I swore then that I would never set foot in church again. I did not for nearly 10 years.

I entered nursing school at Goldwater Memorial Hospital at 17; it was the only free higher education available to me. My special interest in nursing was in orthopedics, particularly orthopedically handicapped children.

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* A book about this school is called The Boys in Cottage Two.

The children's court was presided over by an understanding woman judge, Justine Wise Polier -- the daughter of Rabbi Stephen Wise, courting great interest rabbis of the 1930's and 40's. Judge Polier felt that I needed to be taken away from the rigid atmosphere in which I was being raised and allowed a gentler and freer surroundings. She also felt that the religious indoctrination I was receiving was detrimental to my mental health. For the next three years I was surrounded by exuberant Reformed Judaism at the Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls School, a facility run by the Jewish Board of Guardians. I was the only Christian child in the school.* On Sundays, I attended the Lutheran Church at Hawthorne, New York and was received as a communicant there. Some of the high spots of those years were the religious rows between the girls at Cedar Knolls and our young rabbi with the young minister of the Lutheran Church. During those years I was awarded a scholarship to Bridgeport High School and later attended Junior College (since I was too young at High School graduation to be released from Hawthorne.)

At fifteen, during a vacation at home, I was told by my stepmother (a registered nurse) that there was something "unnatural" about my relationships with women. I had as yet had no homosexual experiences. Two years later, my father turned me out of the house (following my release from Hawthorne) because of my "morals" -- I had by then discovered my sexual attraction to women. He and I quarrelled on the steps of the Nanuet Collegiate Church with me calling him a hypocrite, forever talking about his love of God and showing none. I swore then that I would never set foot in church again. I did not for nearly 10 years.

I entered nursing school at Gouverneur Memorial Hospital at 17; it was the only free higher education available to me. My special interests in nursing was in orthopedics, particularly orthopedically handicapped children.

* A book about this school is called The Boys in Cottage Two.

During the next eight years I lived as many young gays do in New York. I drank too much, went to too many parties, stayed out half the night and got up late for work. I worked as an orthopedic nurse, as assistant medical records librarian at Mt. Sinai Hospital, wrote copy for an advertising agency (during a time when I thought I never wanted to go back to nursing again). And I had a number of lovers, usually older women. At 26, over the ending of a particularly intense relationship, I attempted suicide. I went into psychotherapy -- and remained in it for seven years. In the course of therapy, I realized that I would have to come to grips with my religious beliefs and my feelings about my father, which were deeply intertwined. The Calvinistic God and my father were irrevocably one in my head, and so long as I was out of favor with the one, I was totally lost to the other.

In the course of trying to find myself I took inquirers' classes with the Paulist Fathers, but the instructor's teachings about Judaism (which I had learned to respect at Hawthorne) made me reject that brand of Catholicism as a possibility.

Being politically liberal -- no, radical -- I suspected I could be a religious liberal, and attended the Unitarian Church for nearly a year. My deeply ingrained Trinitarian beliefs could not accept the rejection of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

I even attended the Jehovah's Witnesses group for about six weeks, wondering if their doctrines were of value to me. They were not. I made no commitments, belonged to no church, but continued to read and search.

In the course of psychotherapy I discovered a heterosexual side to my personality that had never been explored or expressed. I married at 28, my first child was born a year later, and for the next few years, following this marriage to a much older man, was happy as the wife and mother of two small sons. In 1961, I learned that my husband had terminal cancer of the colon. During my marriage, I was reconciled with my father and his new wife (my first stepmother had died about 10 years earlier).

During the next eight years I lived as many young girls do in New York. I drank too much, went to too many parties, stayed out half the night and got up late for work. I worked as an orthoptic nurse, as assistant medical research librarian at St. Elias Hospital, model copy for an advertising agency (during a time when I thought I never wanted to go back to nursing again). And I had a number of lovers, usually older women. At 25, over the ending of a particularly intense relationship, I attempted suicide. I went into psychotherapy -- and remained in it for seven years. In the course of therapy, I realized that I would have to come to grips with my religious beliefs and my feelings about my father, which were deeply interwoven. The Calvinistic God and my father were irrevocably one in my mind, and so long as I was out of favor with the one, I was totally lost to the other.

In the course of trying to find myself I took Hopkinsers' classes with the Quaint Fathers, but the instructor's lectures about Dulaies (which I had learned to recognize as Hutchesons) made me reject that brand of Catholicism as a possibility.

Being politically liberal -- no, radical -- I suspected I could be a religious liberal, and attended the Unitarian Church nearby a year. My deeply ingrained Christian beliefs could not accept the relegation of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

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Following my husband's death, I began to drink heavily. I lost my job with Mt. Sinai Hospital for absenteeism due to drinking. I went into A.A., but must admit that I was one of the people it did not work for -- A.A. meetings merely made me thirsty! Deeply troubled, having been drinking, I was walking up Broadway one Wednesday evening and passed the First Baptist Church on 79th Street. I heard an old hymn being sund, and lonely and longing for some kind of release from my personal anguish I went into the church and sat in a rear pew. "Now I'm Coming Home" was sung as the invitation, and after a long period of pain and isolation in my life, I realized that I could indeed come home to God, everyone can -- anyone can.

Very shortly after that I left New York -- realizing that I badly needed a change of scene -- for New Orleans, Louisiana. I picked up the threads of a relationship with a woman that dated back to my late teens (and which had continued sporadically during my twenties). I began work as an orthopedic nurse at the Browne-McHardy Clinic, where an elderly co-worker convinced me to attend the First Baptist Church. Wondering whether First Baptist Church of New Orleans would be anything like First Baptist Church of New York, I accepted mainly out of curiosity. I did not become a Baptist easily. Baptists had been laughingstock all through my childhood. I had a Dunker grandmother, and her quaint "unworldly" ways were a family joke. However, something in the Baptist beliefs I was hearing Sunday by Sunday touched old memories, and the religious convictions of that old woman began to stand out live and strong. I remembered stories of old Anabaptists and of her German Baptist Brethren church. The Baptist beliefs that had enriched her life were to save and change mine. For nearly a year, I listened as salvation by grace was preached Sunday by Sunday, with a growing conviction that here was a Christian belief that had special meaning for me. I was able to reach through the years of alienation from God and the church, the years of guilt about my implication in my brother's attack, my guilt about my homosexuality, my degradation in alcoholism and the attendant abuse of my sexuality,

Following my husband's death, I began to drink heavily. I took my job with Mr. Stout's Hospital for Assassinated Life to Ireland. I went into A.A., but went about that I was one of the people it did not work for -- A.A. Meetings merely made me thirsty. Deeply troubled, having been drinking, I was walking my Broadway one Wednesday evening and passed the First Baptist Church on 79th Street. I heard an old hymn being sung, and Tommy and looking for some kind of release from my personal anguish I went into the church and sat in a back pew. "Come Living Home" was sung as the invitation, and after a long period of pain and isolation in my life, I realized that I could indeed come home to God, everyone can -- anyone can.

Very shortly after that I left New York -- realizing that I badly needed a change of scene -- for new friends, location. I picked up the threads of a relationship with a woman that dated back to my late teens (unknown to me continued sporadically during my marriage). I began work at an orphan-site nurse at the Brown-Mackay Clinic, where an elderly co-worker convinced me to attend the First Baptist Church. Wondering whether First Baptist Church of New Orleans would be anything like First Baptist Church of New York, I accepted out of curiosity. I did not become a Baptist overnight. Baptists was been laughing-stock all through my childhood. I had a Catholic grandmother, and her constant "unworthy" were a family joke. However, according to the Baptists beliefs I was learning Sunday by Sunday covered old ground, and the religious convictions of that old woman began to stand out true and strong. I rededicated myself, as did Andabaptists and of Ann Graham Baptist Brazzeen church. The Baptist believe that God sanctified her life were to save and change man. For nearly a year, I listened as salvation by grace was preached Sunday by Sunday, when a breaking conviction that Mary was a Christian belief that God special destiny for me. I was able to reach beyond the years of alienation from God and the church, the years of guilt about my hospitalization in my mother's arms, my guilt about my homosexuality, my disgraceation in Alcoholics, and the astonishment of my sexuality.

and find -- at last -- acceptance by God. Jesus Christ had died for me. My sins were forgiven. I was freed once and for all from guilt and shame. I had experienced God's forgiving love personally, totally, completely in a very certain and strong conversion experience. I was wholer than I had been for years -- possibly ever. I was immersed at age 34. Within months, my drinking problem ceased, never to return, and my life began to take on an order that it had never had. In 1964, I remarried, and realized immediately that I should not have. I was homosexually attracted to an old lover and could not shake it, despite my recent conversion experience. I went through the usual dialogues with God, "If you were going to save me, why didn't you change this, too?" "How can I be a Christian and still be gay?" "Are you testing my faith?" I could not understand how I could go through a complete conversion experience on the one hand and a re-emergence of my homosexuality on the other. God's answer was silence.

After my daughter was born, I met the woman who was to be my lover for the next seven years. Some of God's plan began to unfold. I believe Holy Spirit led me away from work in the medical field into teaching. It was made possible for me to begin work as an elementary school teacher on the strength of my R.N., but with only six hours of college work. God needed schoolteachers who would volunteer for hazardous duty. I was one of the first "cross-over" teachers -- white teachers who would teach in the formerly all-black segregated schools. These schools were in neighborhoods which were undergoing deep racial conflict characterized by attacks on teachers, and on the police by racial militants. The housing project where I worked had literally been under attack, with tanks in the streets. These were the days in New Orleans of the"Howard Johnson sniper" where the situation was very close to armed insurrection. One friend at the Junior High School in the housing project where I taught lost the tips of three fingers when an irate student slammed the door on her hand. It was a dangerous time to be where we were. God, I am convinced, needed us there and led us. It was a good teaching experience. We worked hard, the children learned, and test

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scores rose. We were doing what we had been hired to do -- teach. We did not go on civil rights marches -- we worked at it day by day.

The first semesterI began teaching I entered Tulane University and began a five-year program leading to a B.A. and teacher certification. I was graduated in 1973 (after having carried a full program each year in addition to my teaching load). In 1974 my relationship ended. I returned to New York, feeling that it was time for me to come home. I was stunned by the changes in the city. I was even more stunned by the empty churches. When I had left New York in 1962, it was just after the Billy Graham Crusades at the old Madison Square Garden. God had been alive and well and living in New York. During my years in New Orleans I had been attending church with over 2,000 people present in that church <u>every</u> Sunday. I had been living a life centered on a rich and vital Christian experience of salvation of sinners by a loving God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I had watched people walk the aisle for 12 years and I had seen those same people's lives transformed. I had been deeply touched by the Holy Spirit working in my own life and changing it.

It had not dawned on me that back in my home city there had been such a falling away from the church. Within days of my return to New York, the children and I went back to First Baptist Church and we were astounded that that once vital, living church was a moribund remnant of itself, decaying physically, and seemingly decayed spiritually. I was and still am apalled by the state of the church in that city. There were almost no young people in the churches. There was no vitality. There was no joy. There was a stultifying, stagnant ritualism -- an empty religiosity -- that was so different from the religion I had known in New York, and the amazing, grace-filled, Spirit-filled, joyful Christianity I had experienced in the South.

Shortly after my return to New York, I read of the fire in New Orleans which killed the M.C.C. pastor and 12 of his congregation. I decided to come to M.C.C. as a kind of memorial of my own to those New Orleans brothers and sisters with

across Texas. We were doing what we had been hired to do -- teach. We did not go on civil rights marches -- we worked at it day by day.

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whom I had had some contact. That was my first visit to M.C.C.-N.Y.

My second visit to M.C.C. was a more startling one. Nancy Wilson was preaching, and trying -- by changing the gender of persons in the Bible passage -- to make the service and scripture more relevant to women, and to point out to the men the women's experience of church-going. I was amazed and impressed that a woman could be speaking persuasively and strongly from the pulpit. Feminism was a new experience for me -- there was no movement in New Orleans, just as there was no Gay Liberation movement in that time. Nancy was my first real contact with a feminist in religion and I was impressed with her desire to open Christianity to the greater participation by gay women in the leadership of the church, including the formal ministry. I was also impressed by the free spirit of worship, the exuberance of the congregation, and by a church which was outspokenly frank about the homosexuality of its members.

I was alienated because so few women were in attendance. I did not come back for months.

When I did return, it was with a new lover, and I wanted to get involved. I had had a lot of experience with the church in New Orleans, beginning the year after my conversion. I had studied, taking advantage of every opportunity made available at First Baptist, taking study courses (formal units of study which contain about 14 hours of classroom work, a short exam, and a certificate for completion) under some of the great Southern Baptists: Clark Pinnock on the Bible as Progressive Revelation, Hershel Hobbs on the book of John, J.D. Grey on Amos. I took courses in Christian doctrine, Hebrews, Hosea, and many, many courses in teaching and administering Sunday Schools and Bible-teaching programs for many age groups. I began as a teacher of five-year olds, and in ensuing years taught young women, elderly women, the retarded, was superintendent of a department with over 50 thirteen year olds (eight of them deacon's sons -- which is the worst can of worms I've ever opened). I was finally asked to work in a formal sense with the teaching program of Napoleon Avenue Baptist Church -- a

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brand new church but one which was victim of a changing neighborhood and an elderly clique which drove out all new blood. I taught elementary school age children in the Sunday School, led the teen-age Baptist Training Union, taught the teachers to teach, and did rescue services with the pastor in the decaying back of town area for B-girls and hustlers in the bars to which he was often called when there was a problem. Often he would come get me at night to go off to rescue a child left unattended by a hustler, or to get a drunken woman out of a bar when her husband could not get her to move. If Waif Hamilton were alive, I would get a letter from him, in which, I'm sure, in his old country-boy way he would described the ministry to which he was called and which he often called me. Up front, I Corinthians 11 was observed. Back of town, we all ministered together.

I learned by doing for nearly twelve years, and worked hard at it, rarely missing a Sunday.

At some point during the first year following my association with M.C.C., I began to realize what I thought was God's plan for me. I knew that almost nothing was being done with Lesbian mothers. Gay Liberation seemed to have passed completely over them. I felt that my knowledge of children, education and Christian education and my status as a Lesbian mother gave me particular insight into the needs of these women. I thought, and still think, that God had directed me to New Orleans to re-awaken my Christian beliefs, to lead me to a new understanding of God's love by letting me experience reconciliation through acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for me, and to let me experience the joy of the vital, singing worship of God in rich Southern Baptist tradition, and to return me to New York a changed individual -- to permit me to discover in M.C.C. a place where I could put my gayness, my Christianity, and my feminism to work in one place. I wanted to work in a setting where women could learn and work and study, and experience God in a different and more person-affirming way. Women's experience

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of God can be alienating, not reconciling, depending upon the teachings of the church. The worship experience for females may well need to be different than for males (who are taught to keep artificial distance). I believed then and I believe now that God can use me and wants to use me to lead gay women to Christ; women who have been alienated from the church, from God, and from themselves. I believe that God has led me, by my own experiences, to work particularly with those who are Lesbian mothers. These women are not only experiencing all the rejections by society that gay women experience, but are also isolated from other gay women and from the mainstream of the gay community in many ways. The presence of children in their lives adds a complication that their lovers resent and disparage. I believe and will continue to believe that MCC can affect their lives positively, and have a healing effect in the lives of their children, by leading them to a positive affirmation of their homosexuality in such a way that "coming out" to their children will enrich both their lives. The church has a task of teaching and encouraging that with God directing their lives, their disclosure of their homosexuality will not harm their children, but will strengthen the bond between them.

I believe that MCC can do a positive job of providing religious training and teaching for the children of gay parents, and positive role model identification for these children, along with including them in social activities so that children of gay parents will know and understand that they are not "different" in some way from other children, but that many other youngsters are going through what they are, and that it need not be detrimental to them. This is a task we dare not shun. These are some of our community's children and we must not turn them away.

Since I have been in MCC, and particularly during the time I worked with the New York church, we tried to teach this by precept and by example in our Lesbian mothers' group and in all church activities. During that time, I worked with the gay women's community to try to bridge the gap between Christianity and

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feminism, through speaking to women's groups, working together with women in the Women's Liberation movement, liaison with "Dykes and Tykes", writing and publication in women's papers, etc., to help women realize that although feminist one does not need to live "Beyond God the Father," but that one can be gay, be Christian, and be feminist -- and one can do all of them successfully through interaction with M.C.C. Since moving to Boston last fall, I have continued that kind of activity, branching out to include also the women seminarians at Boston, Harvard, and Andover-Newton schools of theology. During my year or more with M.C.C. New York, I used my teaching skills to "build up the brethren" by helping provide that church with a vital Bible teaching program.

My formal Christian beliefs, stated as simply as I can, are these:

1. The Bible is the progressive revelation of God to humanity. It was written by humans inspired by God. God makes divine revelation available to us through the Word; the Bible comes alive and speaks to us in situations in which we find ourselves.

   The revelation of God is not knowledge <u>about</u> God; but is God present and acting in us. This God is transcendent and yet personal, having neither sex (is not "he" or "she" -- but as the Zohar expresses it, is "ineffable.")

   God is not provable in human terms, but is found only as known in our lives and expressed in the lives of others in the past, i.e. as history.

2. We are all individuals possessed of free will. We make our own decisions in concrete situations. We are answerable to God for those decisions. Daily, we make existential choices.

3. We are separated by sin and guilt from God. As the Bible says: "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10), "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). We are unworthy to come to God. God, however, loves us and reaches toward us. "But God loved us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Romans 5:8). God acts to draw us God-ward. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us to God, and instruct us in our wrong-doing, and enlighten us as to God's purpose in our lives.

4. One becomes a Christian by taking a "leap of faith" as Kierkegaard expressed it, in accepting the fact that "God so loved the world that we were given the Only-Begotten, that whosoever believes shall not perish, but have life everlasting." (John 3:16). That faith demands a commitment, one either accepts or rejects the sacrificial death of Christ as atonement for one's personal sins.

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5. One must give oneself to the often lonely task of following God, for in following in faith one often does not fully understand today what God may make clear tomorrow.

   There is always the possibility that God may never fully make understandable in our terms the reasons for events in our lives, but the faithful commitment is still demanded of us.

6. We recognize our helplessness and must face our weakness and dependency upon God. It is God who has created us. God is Lord of our lives and of the universe, and is so much greater than we that we cannot hope to comprehend in our finite terms God's complete infiniteness. We are created in God's image, not God in ours. We cannot control God by prayer or by bargaining -- yet, God in mercy hears our prayers and accepts our sacrifices and meets our needs.

7. God took the form of humanity in Jesus Christ so that we could begin to comprehend. We can understand because God chose to bridge the gulf between the "ineffable" and us to enable us to receive the message. Jesus Christ became the "Living Word" of God.

8. We cannot understand God by any act of the will or reason. We understand God by faith. That faith can be helped to grow by a better understanding of how God acts in human life. For this reason we preach and teach.

9. We experience God in a personal relationship -- what Martin Buber describes as an "I-Thou" relationship. It is at this point that the question of what is God like, and how God acts is particularly important to women. The "Thou" which God is may be unreachable if that God is understood and experienced in alienating terms.

10. As followers of Jesus, we make ethical choices based on his teachings. Our relationships with other human beings must be within the context of the normative values expressed in the Bible, but those values cannot be followed blindly and must be followed in the spirit of Love taught by Jesus Christ.

11. Righteousness is based upon obedience to God. God speaks to us through the normative values of Scripture: God says, "Thou shalt not..." and "Thou shall ..." Sin occurs when humanity thinks it is good enough to scorn others for their sinfulness, and when we <u>willfully</u> set ourselves in opposition to God.

    We are freed from the law by God's mercy. "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient: All things are lawful to me, but all things edify not." (I Corinthians 10:23). We are obedient out of love for God, not fear. "Perfect love casts out fear." (I John 4:18). Christianity is a way of living under a loving God who directs us in the way to go by the instruction of the Holy Spirit which dwells within us. "God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (I Corinthians 3:10).

12. The demonic exists in the world in the form of evil, but not necessarily personified. <u>People</u> choose to do evil. Corporate evil is larger than the sum of its parts. We can no longer "blame it on the snake." Satan, in fact, does not make us do it; we choose evil over good.

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12. The demonic exists in the world in the form of evil, but not necessarily personified. People choose to do evil. Conscious evil is larger than the sum of its parts. We can no longer "blame it on the devil." Satan, in fact, does not make us do it; we choose evil over good.

Sadly, systems are often unjust, and it is the Christian's duty to attempt to change them, even at personal risk. This includes ecclesiastical systems. The gay person, therefore, is faced with a categorical imperative to attempt to change an ecclesiastical system which excludes him or her.

The female is faced with a categorical imperative to attempt to change a system which is inherently degrading and exclusive of the equal participation of women. This is often painful, because the process of opening up new ways leads to times of estrangement for those comfortable with the old ways, and raises anxieties which must be dealt with in Christian love. Even so, we cannot turn back.

13. I believe, in faith, that Jesus Christ who was crucified for the sins of humanity, rose again and will come again. In this resurrection, Christ was the victor over sin, evil, and death. I believe in an end time when there will be a final judgment and separation of those who have accepted Jesus Christ and those who have rejected the Christ-event. I believe that those who have knowingly rejected Christ will eventually be rejected.

14. I believe in the resurrection of the body, but that as Paul wrote, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (I Corinthians 15:51,52).

    I do not know what form this change will take, but trust that "eternal life" implies some never-ending limitless being with God in some form understandable in God's terms if not in mine. I fully believe that Hell is separation from God, and is our due only for rejection of God's offer of mercy and reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

15. I believe that we can strengthen our closeness to Christ by participation in the rites and ordinances of the church. We follow in obedience to Christ's command to be baptized, and are baptized into his death, burial, and resurrection: "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:18), and "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism unto death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Glory of the Creator, we too might be created in newness of life." (Romans 6:3,4). That baptism makes us equal in God's sight. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-28).

I believe that my training as a teacher makes me a valuable minister of the gospel by giving me training in the following areas, and their application to the church:

1. Teaching Methods: Applicable to classroom teaching and small group instruction; small and large group activities utilizing a convener or task leader (raps, work groups, recreational activities). Bible teaching,

Sadly, systems are often unjust, and it is the Christian's duty to attempt to change them, even at personal risk. This includes secularized systems. The gay person, therefore, is faced with a case-by-case imperative to attempt to change an ecclesiastical system which excludes him or her.

The family is faced with a comparatively immediate or accurate change system which is formerly exploitive and exclusive of the equal participation of women. This is often painful, because the process of repairing damaged ways leads to times of painfulness, for some confusion in the ways, and raises anxieties which must be dealt with in Christian ways. Even so, we cannot turn back.

13. I believe, in fidelity that Jesus Christ who was crucified for the sins of humanity, rose again and will come again. In this resurrection, Christ was the victor over sin, evil, and death. I believe in an end-time when will be a final judgment and separation of those who have accepted Jesus Christ and those who have rejected the Christ-event. I believe that those who have knowingly rejected Christ will eventually be rejected.

14. I believe in the resurrection of the body, but that as Paul wrote, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

I do not know what form this change will take, but trust that "eternal life" implies some never-ending fellowship with God in some form unknowable in this life, perhaps, if not in value. I fully believe this, that is sufficient for me, not as our way for rejection of God's offer of mercy and reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

15. I believe that we can strengthen our closeness to Christ by participation in the rites and ordinances of the church. We follow in obedience to Christ's command to do so. Christ, who experienced them his days, baptism and resurrection, "in shadowing and value displayed at all events, manifestation, then in his mode of the Creator, his Lord, and the Holy Spirit..." (Fortunes Acts). And "in you was done unto all of us was have been baptized into his death; so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might be raised in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4). That baptism, either or equal in Christ's sight. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-28).

I believe that my ordination as a baptism makes me a valuable minister of the gospel by giving me training in the following areas, and their application to the church:

1. Teaching & Preaching: Competence in discourse, direction and small group instruction, small and large group activities application & conference or task leader (i.e., work groups, recreational activities). Study teaching.

2. Education in Psychology: (Courses include general, child development, educational, adolescent, abnormal, and social psychology). This produces a wide academic background in counseling individuals, parents and children, particularly in the area of Lesbian mothers and their youngsters. It is also of value in dealing with the adolescent homosexual.

3. Education in Sociology: (Courses include Introductory (2), Urban, Deviant and Social Conflict, Family): This produces an academic background which contains knowledge of demography of cities and produces awareness of changing populations, probable locations of gay ghettoes, etc. Deviance and social conflict brings into great relevance the gay liberation movement and its implications for the church; sociology of the family is again applicable to work with Lesbian mothers and their families, also to couple counseling and working with parents of gays.

4. American Studies Major: (Courses include American History (plus the progressive movement) (4), Social history of the Colonial period, American Literature (2), Black Literature (2), Hispanic-American Literature and Culture (4 courses, in Spanish) -- this produces a wide background in the social, cultural and economic forces in the United States. It also contained background material in the religious history of the United States, from which sprang the social gospel and eventually the gay religious movement. Black and Hispanic literature courses produce an understanding and awareness of the cultural patterns of other ethnic groups.

   World history courses in the time since the Reformation are also applicable to a knowledge of effects on the church.

5. Art, Music, and Literature for Children and the teaching of them, makes me a valuable instructor of Bible teachers for children, and in methods and materials which are appropriate to various age groups and their abilities.

My nursing background gives me a greater understanding of the aged, retarded, handicapped; areas in which many people are unable to work because of fear or revulsion. This makes hospital or institutional visitation, counseling or the consoling of the dying and bereaved less stressful for me and for those being worked with, and provides greater understanding of the psychological and physiological changes involved. While I have not had pastoral counseling, I have had experience with alcoholic and drug-addicted patients; long experience as an orthopedic nurse with the physically handicapped; and experience with ill normal and retarded children, as well as counseling disturbed and disturbing children and their parents as an educational remediation teacher. While in nursing, I was involved in a multi-disciplinary project in Services for the Aging, and aided in the production of the book, Five Hundred Over Sixty, a study of the aging people in the Yorkville and Kips Bay areas of New York City.

2. Education in Psychology. (Courses include general, child development, educational, abnormal, and social psychology). This provides a wide basic grounding in comprehension individually, parents and children, particularly in the area of leisure culture, and their youngsters. It is also of value in dealing with the adolescent homosexual.

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I have had the Dale Carnegie and Dorothy Carnegie (women's program) Courses in Human Relations and Public Speaking. Both of these are directly applicable to the ministerial situation, and in some areas are utilized by religious groups, seminaries, etc., to train their students in public speaking. (I was employed by the Carnegie Courses in New Orleans when I had had an accident, broke my leg, and could not do my usual work). I feel that the Lord has given me a talent for public speaking and the gift of preaching, and I feel that one of the contributions I can make to the church is in the preaching of the Word.

Religious Studies: Finances have prevented my being enrolled for formal degree at a theological school, however, I have made application to the Boston University School of Theology, and will be admitted in September 1977. Since I am at a masters' level, this makes the courses expensive (in the range of $300.00 each) and probably will necessitate a five-year program of study. I have had extensive Bible preparation, however, and courses in Christian doctrine. I had one course at the New York Theological Seminary, "The Christian Experience with Good and Evil," and two courses at the Boston Institute for Christian Studies, "Sexual Ethics," and "Interpreting Theology," a base-level course introducing theology. I have read extensively in the fields of ancient history, theology, and church history. I enjoy the research and reading which is involved in the preparation of lectures, sermons, etc. I am planning to take Greek at Harvard in the fall, and have been engaged in a program of teaching myself to read Greek (this is possible because much medical terminology is Greek-rooted and I am familiar with the Greek alphabet and better able to figure out the meanings of many Greek words). I taught a one-year course at the New York church in Introduction to the Bible which used seminary-level texts and materials. I am knowledgeable in the field of theology.

Office and Administrative Skills: I managed the New York MCC church office for nearly a year, taking care of mailing lists, supplies, getting out a mailing of over 1,000 copies of the Mustard Seed monthly, preparing the Sunday worship

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Office and Administrative Skills: I managed the New York Mt. Zion's office for nearly a year, taking care of mailing lists, supplies, operations, mailing of over 1,000 copies of the Mizpeh Seed monthly, preparing the Sunday worship

bulletins weekly, often writing or adapting the calls to worship and the prayers of confession for other ministers (i.e. the pastor and staff minister), in addition to my own. I am currently employed as a research assistant at New England Medical Center, where in addition to the research duties, I also handle the preparation of manuscripts for publication, do much of the statistical work, keep the office records, patient files, etc. for a research surgeon. I type, edit, proof, etc.

Liturgics: I have structured my own and assisted other exhorters in planning their worship services. For nine months, another exhorter and I carried full responsibility for the Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Since being in Boston I have preached once a month, been responsible for the communion (either here or in nearby towns) once a month, and for various parts of the service nearly every week. I am not a ritualist, but have respect and regard for the needs expressed by the variety of Christian backgrounds found in M.C.C.'s. My own style tends to be more "evangelical" which I see as providing a balance to the many other varieties of styles represented in this area of the District.

Group Leadership: In New York I supervised the Lesbian Mothers Rap Group for well over a year, was the major convener of the Women's Rap Group, which often had 40-45 women present, and since being in Boston have been one of the participants in a mixed rap, speaking on women's issues, primarily. Here in Boston, we are beginning to re-establish the Women's Rap, but weather and time factors have hindered. The value of these groups has been shown at New York, where the number of women present in the rap group was directly translatable in the numbers of women being brought into the worship service and eventually to the membership of the church. It is too early to tell whether this will be the pattern at Boston.

Women's Activities: In addition to working with the rap groups, I have acted as Director of Women's Activities in the Boston church, working with the women who come to the church as counselor, friend, confidante, etc. Generally

building weekly, often writing or adapting the calls to worship and the prayers of consecration for other ministers (i.e. the pastor and assistant). In addition to my team, I am currently employed as a research assistant at New England Medical Center, where in addition to the research duties, I also handle the preparation of manuscripts for publication, do much of the statistical work, keep the office records, patient files, etc. for a research surgeon. I type, edit, proof, etc.

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Women's Activities: In addition to working with the rap groups, I have acted as director of Women's Activities in the Boston church, working with the women who come to the church as counselor, friend, confidante, etc. Personally

women who come to M.C.C.'s go through a period of "There are so few women involved in the church," and often drop out because of discomfort at this situation. The presence of a woman in leadership tends to ameliorate this. We have also encouraged women's activities -- a women's retreat, for example -- as well as encouraging women to participate in mixed activities. Through meetings, dinners, and informal contacts we have befriended and worked with many women both in New York and Boston. My activities in the feminist community help to dispel the idea that M.C.C. is an all-male church, and tend to bring some women to the church who might not ordinarily come. This often includes hard-core feminists, who often begin by stating that the church has done nothing but oppress women. This activity was well-underway in New York, and is just beginning in Boston, where time is now permitting me to reach out more to the women's community, after having spent a good bit of time in mixed activities. I would suspect that my greatest value to M.C.C. would be in my activities in the feminist community, because that takes me to where large numbers of gay women are, and opens up the whole area of discussion of religion for women. There are far more gay women in the feminist community than any other single place -- including bars and other types of social organizations -- and even if we do not bring them to the church, it is a part of the community we must minister to, if we are indeed speaking of ministering to the gay community. In Boston right now, that ministry seems to be most concerned with gay women seminarians at the 9 theological schools here in town, but this may be a rich ministry for M.C.C., since most of these women see themselves eventually in ministry in non-gay oriented churches, and may need M.C.C. as a place to build up their own strengths to enable them to minister to others.

Personal Qualifications: I am 48 years old, have arrived at some level of maturity and begun to mellow a little. In the past year I have worked with and dealt with the topic of anger in my own life, and am beginning to understand this as part of the opening up process from closetedness and acceptance of rigid

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Personal Qualifications: I am 28 years old. Have arrived at some level of maturity and begun to mellow a little. In the past year I have learned more and dealt with the topic of anger in my own life, and am beginning to understand this as part of the opening up process from closedness and accentuness of right

role expectations. Many women have gone through similar processes, if one is to read and believe the literature coming from the women's movement. It is apparently a process many of us share. I understand that there is a point at which anger is destructive -- of self and others -- however, there is also a point at which anger motivates one toward making changes; in one's own situation, one's own person, as well as in others and the greater situation in which one finds oneself. I am learning to deal with that anger more constructively -- although am by no means at the point of perfection. I am learning to not provoke direct confrontation (although obviously there are times when confrontation is the only way to make any sizeable gains). I am learning to be more cooperative, and to work with others toward responsible goals.

I have "intestinal fortitude" and the ability to bounce back when faced with odds that seem insurmountable. I have lived through many things in my life that have taught me "survival skills," which may be of value in the ministry in M.C.C. I have learned to "shake the dust from my feet and not look back" when situations seem unproductive, and yet not to run from difficulty. I understand managing a slim budget, and have raised three children against severe financial odds. Running an M.C.C. against the same odds will not come as a surprise.

I am not always tolerant of the supervision of male authority figures. While I respect and admire many of my male colleagues, I am particularly aware of sexist attitudes and patronizing tendencies, and react to these. I am learning to work more cooperatively in spite of these feelings. I believe in egalitarian relationships in the church, both among the clergy and between the clergy and laity and am interested in working to encourage greater participation by lay people in the really important work of the church. I am learning to love my enemies -- in hard-nosed practice. As far as male church members are concerned, I have good rapport with many of them, both at New York and in Boston, and many seek me out for advice, counseling, consoling, and support. I enjoy working

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I am learning to react less adamantly to perceptions of sexism and patronizing attitudes in the males in M. C. C. (and some of the females). This makes working together somewhat easier. I do, however, believe in egalitarian relationships in the church, both among the clergy and between clergy and laity, and I am interested in working to encourage greater participation by lay people in the ongoing work of the church. I am learning to love my enemies -- in hard-nosed practice. I have good rapport with many of the church members, male and female, and men often seek me out for advice, counselling, consolation, and support. I enjoy working with those whom the church often rejects -- the different. I work

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with both men and women, and am not a separatist either by practice or inclination. I enjoy working with the radical activists of the Gay Liberation movements, and often work with them to better relationships between them and M.C.C., particularly many from groups with antagonistic attitudes toward the church -- any church -- including M.C.C., acting as a bridge between radicals and Christians.

I like activity. I enjoy work. I enjoy being around groups of people, yet I enjoy the solitary study and work of preparation of sermons, etc. I set aside daily time for quiet prayer and meditation, usually at my office after work during a break between the day's activity and the evening's. Often this time permits me to recover energy and begin anew. I am a caring person and many people respond to this.

I believe we are created in God's image and God loves us, gay or straight, male or female. I believe God can and does forgive us. I am dedicated to the preaching of God's word. I believe that Jesus Christ died for God's gay children as well as straight ones, and that that message should be whispered to those in closets and shouted to those in the streets. I believe in a God that cares deeply about us, and wants us to care deeply about each other. I am committed to helping women who have become alienated from God and the church to find their way back -- hopefully to a different church than the one they left. I feel called to minister to the needs of people in both spiritual and emotional ways, as pastor and as visible spokesperson for the gay community to the straight community, particularly in liberation activities. I feel that I am God's instrument at hand, faulty tho' I may be, and that I have been called to the ministry in M.C.C. I have tried for over two years to accept that call and to minister. I have made mistakes, am learning from them, and will continue to learn and work for the growth of M.C.C., both in numbers and spiritual strength. By God's mercy and facing God's judgment, this is my statement of faith and call.

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GOALS

Primarily the goal of Metropolitan Community Churches is that of the Christian church at large. We are here to preach the word, bring Jesus Christ to the people, and bring them into fellowship with other Christians. To that end, MCC's have a responsibility to provide worship services, teaching and discussion periods where new believers can be instructed in Christian beliefs, and a supportive Christian atmosphere.

Additionally, because the role of the homosexual in our society has been that of oppressed people, we have the responsibility to enlighten ourselves, to strengthen gay people's image of themselves as worthy and valuable human beings, and the necessity to speak to the community at large concerning the liberation of gays from stereotypical roles. We are, then, a part of Gay Liberation.

Third, we are part of theological liberation. As one of the groups of oppressed persons who are re-defining our roles and redefining what the church has to say to us, M.C.C. needs to work cooperative with Blacks, Hispanics, and women to open theology to a more caring and participatory role by minority groups. Our theology must be an open one, our church in touch with the thinking and writing being done by liberation theologists and ethicists within Christianity. We are not an isolated phenomenon -- we are part of a movement, and can be a very vital, living part of that movement. This is particularly true concerning the opening up of the discussion of the nature of God, the nature of human beings, and ethical dealings with people who are different.

STRUCTURES

Our structures need to be as democratic and free as is possible, given the community in which we minister. We have relatively few minor children as members, we have few people who are incapable of making sound decisions. For these reasons, MCC's need to be as participatory as is possible for us to make them. Lay people <u>are</u> MCC, and they need to be involved.

For this reason the participatory democracy of the local church must be protected and encouraged. Boards of directors, committee chairs, lay leaders should represent as wide a group of the congregation as possible. People should be encouraged to know as much about the Fellowship and District levels of MCC, and information should be widely disseminated. Insofar as possible, these lay leaders should be encouraged to actually <u>run</u> the church, with the pastor being there for advice, consultation, and back up when needed. The pastor's role is not that of autocrat, martinet or superior. We are equal co-workers in the spread of Christianity, and lay men and women have much to contribute. The clergy are <u>servants</u> of the congregation and should be there as supporters and facilitators. People learning to govern the church are also learning skills useful in governing themselves. We limit the growth of human potential when clergy take on all of the valuable tasks in the church.

Much of this can be said on the District and Fellowship levels as well. While there is a need to be protective of what is said by us <u>qua church</u>, leadership at District and Fellowship levels must also be trusting of the individual pastors and lay leaders. Participation by as many different people, with as many different talents as possible needs to be encouraged. Our structures need to be open to input from a variety of levels, not merely those nearest the top. Probably the most valuable form of government for us is congregational-associational, and not hierarchichal. I believe that the District Coordinators and Elders should act primarily in an advisory capacity and not as ecclesiastical superiors. I feel this is more in keeping with the needs and capacities of our membership.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS HOPED FOR: THE SENSE OF THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

By Robert W. Jensen

As most of the ministers of the Northeast District are aware, the women of this district are very interested in finding a way to talk about God in terms which are not exclusively male, and yet which do not necessarily exchange male terminology for female. Is there some way to describe God in terms other than as "Father/Mother", for example, or to avoid exchanging "Lord" for "Lady" (as in "Lord of the Dance" or "Lady of Birth"), or for that matter, <u>any</u> generic term at all.

To this extent, I have been doing a great deal of reading regarding theological language, linguistics, women and language, and related subjects. This book was one of the most important, because Jensen begins with where our formal scientific theological discourse had its beginning -- with Origen -- and traces the language we use to speak about God through Thomas Aquinas to a whole group of German theologians now working in this field.

The book opened up two important ideas to me: (1) The absolute unknowability of God except as "reflection" or "image", seen through the life of Jesus Christ (which I am still not sure I agree with); and (2) All statements about God are analogously descriptive (which I <u>do</u> agree with).

> (God) can be named -- that is, words can be found suitable for talk about *Him* -- only from *His* effects. All speech about God is, therefore, in language drawn from our speech about creatures.
>
> Our knowledge of God from *His* effects can never, therefore, amount to a knowledge of what God is. We can never say: "God is ..." for the word that would appear in the blank would be a generic word, and no such word can be univocally used of God. *He* belongs to no class.[1]

(It is interesting that while saying this, the author has indeed classified God through the choice of pronomials as <u>male being</u>. Such, however, is the nature of theological writings, which generally drive feminists up the wall, since at one count in a paragraph of 12 lines there were 23 references to God as male being and six references to humanity as *Man*.)

THE MYTHOLOGY OF TOMORROW: NOTES FOR THE STUDY OF TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETIES
by Robert E. Jensen

As most of the readers of the Northeast Bibliophile are aware, the women of this district are very interested in finding ways to talk about and to share which are not exclusively male. And yet which, in the necessarily specialized male terminology for females. Is there, somehow, to describe her in a sense other than as "Tramp/Mother", for example, or to avoid exclusively "male" terms (as in "Lord of the Universe" or "Lady of Winds"), or for that matter, not worry about terms at all?

To this end, I have been doing a great deal of reading concerning Indo-European language, linguistics, women and language, and related subjects. This work was one of the most important, because it began dealing with words and formal scientific chronological disconnects and its beginning -- with Orient -- and ended language we use to speak about our humanity. Thanks Andrews to a whole group of Eastern Mythologists mentioning in this field.

The book opened up two important ideas to me: (1) The "Goddess" phenomenon of God appears as "reflection" or "image", even through the idea of Deity Christ which I am still not sure, I agree with; and (2) All testaments seem to be analogically descriptive (which I do agree with).

(And) can be made so. This is, however, to be found subtly in the Bible about God -- only from the effected. All speech about God is tropes. In language drawn from our shared experiences.

Our conclusions of God then are always con-gruent. Symbols, phonemes to a Goddess or that God is. We can never "see" God. The more words just would a-cross in our image would be a phoneme in some, no. Even words can be analyzed of God. As talking to a-cross.

(It is interesting that Jeff's saying this, the author has indicated through the choice of pronouns as well. Still, however, it has meaning of theological relations, which generally deny feminity to God, since of one count in a paragraph of 12 lines there are 20 references to God as male being and six references to humanity as man.)

Therefore, obviously, all statements about God would have to be formulated as "God is like ..." and then giving some descriptive term which must be formulated as an analogy. God is to humanity as a father is to his children (God:humanity::Father:children) or God is to father as humanity is to children. As for real knowledge of God we can only know God by God-actions. Which, in essence, validates Mary Daly's idea that God is not a noun at all, but rather a verb. We cannot actually know what God is, we can only know God by Godself acting in our lives, and as Jensen says:

> ...the words that we use to speak of *Him*, the "names" we use as predicates of sentences with God as subject, can never name *His* essence. Since our knowledge of creatures cannot give us knowledge of God's essence, our creature-language cannot name it. In this way...we can name *Him* from creatures: but not so that the name points out *His* essence.
>
> But God is ontologically different from creatures; *He* is what *He* is in a different way. Which is to say, *He* possesses *His* attributes in a different way.
>
> We cannot directly speak of God's characters as they inhere in *Him*. For God is not available for inspection. (God) can only be known from *His* effects. Therefore, only the alternative is open -- the analagous use of words.[2]

For us, this means that we can use any meaningful term about God with the provision that we make the statement, "God is like...," rather than "God is..." and we can open up the whole realm of language about the attributes of God without fearing that we are treading upon theologically thin ice. The very structure of theological discourse, imagery and analogy, permit us to describe God in a variety of ways. If God is "like Father," God is "like Mother," for if we experience God as one, we are permitted to experience God as the other -- neither expresses per se the ineffable quality which is God more than the other. Origen, for example, points out that "Father" is merely an image (εικων) used to express the concept that God is essentially goodness and essentially creative (but so is "mother".) Jensen goes on to say that "The break between the ontological mode of God and that of the realm in which we are captive is the echatological boundary between history and the transcendent goal and meaning

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> ...the words that we use so much of God, the "names" we give as predicates of transcendence with God as subject, can never claim exactness. Since our knowledge of God cannot give us knowledge of God's essence, our creature-language cannot name Him. In this way...we can move away from our creatures: but not so that we make positive our essence.
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> But God is ontologically different from creatures, as is what we is in a different way. Which is to say, we necessarily see alternate in a different way.
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> We cannot directly speak of God's eternal-nature in this life. For God is not available for our investigation. God only is known from "the effects". Therefore, only the alternatively to speak -- the analogous use of words.

For us, this means that we can use any meaningful word about God with the provision that we make the statements "God is like..." instead than "God is..." and we can open up the whole realm of language about the attributes of God without fearing that we are treading upon theologically thin ice. The very structure of theological discourse, imagery and analogy, reminds us of God in a variety of ways. If God is "like father," God is "like mother," for if God exists not as one, we are permitted to speak of God as the other -- neither masculine nor female the inevitable duality which is God does then the opposite. For example, points out that "father" is merely an image (symbol) used to express the concept that God is essentially goodness and creatively creative (just so is "mother"). Barth goes on to say that "the image relation the ontological unity of God and that of the world in which we are creative is the ontological boundary between history and the transcendent and beyond

of history. If we are to know God it will be across this final barrier." Jensen points out that there is an essential hopelessness in an attempt to talk about God, because we are bound by finite language to experience and express an in finite being.

This book, for me, then is base 1 in our need to find new theological ways of speaking about God in Metropolitan Community Churches. It provides the rationale for our operation on the theological language of our time, and for a restructuring of that language so that it is not sexist, patriarchal, and descriptive of male-bonding, as the church has historically used it, but becomes inclusive, egalitarian, and descriptive of our non-traditional community.

Jensen, Robert W: The Knowledge of Things Hoped For: The Sense of Theological Discourse, Oxford University Press, 1969.

[1] p. 69

[2] p. 75-76

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Jensen, Robert W. The Knowledge of Things Hoped For: The Sense of Theological Discourse. Oxford University Press, 1959.

[1] p. 69

[2] p. 78-79

THE WIDER PLACE by Eugenia Price

Eugenia Price's book, The Wider Place, was written for lay people and has its greatest appeal to Evangelicals and others from the more fundamentalist religious groups. I read it at a time when I needed to recover from having spent 10 weeks in a sexual ethics course at the Boston Center for Theological Studies, as part of a task force from M.C.C. and Evangelicals Concerned,who were there to participate in the course and make a "presence" of gay people during the discussion of sexual ethics in this very fundamentalist group. Admittedly,we had been frightened about what that church's attitude to us would be. The course was taught by an extremely rigid young Southern Presbyterian, very concerned with what people "ought" to think and feel about sexual matters. As I sat there, I found myself thinking about fundamentalist Christianity and how little real use it was when people were faced with the really deep decisions of life. We discussed "the right to die", abortion, divorce, and premarital sex, and we discussed homosexuality. Dr. Davis' narrow Christian view was hard to sit through because there were so many places which spoke against the kind of freedom we have learned to accept in M.C.C.

I picked up a copy of this book on the recommendation of Ralph Blair of Evangelicals Concerned, because while we were discussing Evangelicals and Christian Ethics, he pointed out that even within this group there were winds of change ablowing. Ms. Price's book was cited as a good example of this kind of change.

Price begins by describing "the wider place" as a state one achieves in one's particular Christian faith where, having come along the"narrow way" one is free to live in joy, freedom, and a real sense of liberty from the constrictions of what "ought" to be, and what "ought"to be believed; a place

THE WIDER PLACE by Jo-Anne Price

Susanna Price's book, The Wider Place, was written for Joy Angela and has its greatest appeal to Evangelicals and others from the more fundamentalist religious groups. I read it at a time when I needed to recover from having spent 10 weeks in a sexual ethics course at the Boston Seminary for Theological Studies, as part of a task force from N.C.C. and Evangelicals Concerned, who were there to participate in the course and make a "presence" of joy people during the discussion of sexual ethics in this very fundamentalist group. Admittedly we had been frightened about what that church's attitudes to us would be. The course was taught by an extremely rigid young Southern Presbyterian, very concerned with what people "ought" to think and feel about sexual matters. As I sat there, I found myself thinking about fundamentalist Christianity and how little real use it was when people were faced with the reality deep decisions of life. We discussed "the right to die", abortion, divorce, and premarital sex, and we discussed homosexuality. Dr. Davis' narrow Christian view was hard to sit through because there were so many places which spoke against the kind of freedom we have learned to accept in N.C.C.

I picked up a copy of this book on the recommendation of Ruth Slater of Evangelicals Concerned, because while we were discussing Evangelicals and Christian Ethics, he pointed out that even within this group there were signs of change underfoot. Ms. Price's book was cited as a good example of this kind of change.

Price begins by describing "the wider place" as a state one goes into in one's particular Christian faith where, having come about the "narrow way" one is free to live in joy, freedom, and a real sense of liberty from the constrictions of what "ought" to be, and what "might" to be defined as a place

of inner space where we do not fear the disturbances from without.

Price characterizes the fruits of having arrived at the "wider place" as love, joy, peace, patientce, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control -- all of these because the wider place is "safe," and because we are truly safe, we are freed from bitterness, anxiety, unkindness, and compulsion.

Price says of Jesus:

> He was so *free of prejudice* and the *need for personal prestige* and acceptance that he could call the motley collection of disciples he chose. He thought and acted in the freedom of his own identity and purpose.
>
> Because Jesus Christ was God and (hu)Man walking our earth, he was free to *associate with discredited people* and know that his holiness could not be stained. He could treat women, even bad ones, as persons. He could treat social outcasts with dignity.[1] (emphasis hers)

Probably the chapter which had the most meaning for me was entitled, "Freedom from Conformity and Rigidity," because it answered what the whole ethics course seemed to be teaching. Price first quotes Paul: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom 12:2) She remarks that this implies an entire renewal of our minds by new ideals and new attitudes. We are tranformed by God. Conformity, to Price, is too easy a way out -- we simply find a group that makes us comfortable and hew to their party line. We need to be free from outer-directing, superficial attitudes, because they are deadening. Price says that one of the sure signs of transformation is the open, humble, teachable mind. Even entering the process begins to transform us.

Another chapter rich in meaning for me was entitled "Free From Meaningless Life," which was intended to answer the nihilistic attitudes often encountered, both in and out of theology. Price obviously does not agree with Camus that life is absurd.[2] True meaning comes from an encounter with God. It is there because God is there, searching for us. And our lives are never meaningless if we are reaching out to others -- not in selfless service -- but because we

of inner space where we do not fear the disturbances from without.

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are motivated by a real love of others. We will never achieve a truly meaningful life all bottled up and begrudging all we give, but because we are *free to give* and give willingly of ourselves, life truly becomes more abundant. Price quotes from Harold Anderson, calling this "noncoerced abandonment," and marks it as one of the signs of a truly committed person.

Probably the most telling quote in the whole book is this:

> I fear that many people have the Spider-and-the-Fly attitude toward those who do not know Christ. They invite them into their little boxes instead of into the wideness of God's love and mercy.
>
> The most grief-provoking aspect of this cogent comment is that the very Christians who have this attitude are not only the people who have truth to offer those in need, they are almost always the ones who work at it the hardest. They are too often the sincere, tense souls who proclaim the joy of the Lord, but who seldom demonstrate it. They appear to be bound by the very faith which they preach as potentially able to liberate, to set free.
>
> *The tragedy lies in preaching grace and living judgment.*[3]

Price's book is of value to us in M.C.C. because it represents (in the enemy camp, as it were) a point of view we have espoused. Truly loving Christianity does not imprison, it sets people free because God "loves us and wants to give us the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 12:32). It is good to hear it from an Evangelical.

Two other books dealing with Christian ethics from a liberating point of view are Ethics, Issues and Alternatives, which surprisingly enough, was the text for the course mentioned above, although the instructor rarely mentioned it and seemed too ashamed of it to give it credit. From a more scholarly point of view, and more for MCC ministers than laypeople was Faith and Freedom, which included the proceedings of the meeting of the Society for Evangelical Ethics, held in Germany in 1969. A particularly good chapter in that book was by John McKenzie, "Freedom and a Free God", as was a quotation from Karl Barth on the task of the ethicist. Barth's article holds that ethics must help people make decisions, or they will reject the ethic involved, and the ethicist will have been of no value at all.

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> The tragedy lies in preaching grace and living judgment.[3]

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Two other books dealing with Christian ethics from a liberation point of view are Liberty, Justice and Alternatives, which surprisingly enough, was the book for the courses mentioned above, although the instructor fairly considered it and seemed too relaxed of it to give it credit. From a more conservative point of view, and more for MCC administers than laymanship was Faith and Freedom, which included the proceedings of the meeting of the Society for Evangelical Ethics, held in Germany in 1959. A contextually good chapter in that book was by John Mackenzie, "Freedom and a Free God", as was a discussion from Karl Barth on the test for the atheists. Barth's article holds that atheists must make secular moral decisions, or they will reject the Christ's invitation, and the atheists will have been of no value at all.

In all these were three exciting books dealing with Christian ethics, well worth reading. Eugenia Price, by the way, has agreed to be on the advisory committee for Evangelicals Concerned, and has much to offer gay people from the fields of liberation ethics and liberation theology.

Price Eugenia: The Wider Place, Zondervan, Gr. Rap. 1966

1. P 19
2. Camus, Albert: The Myth of Sisyphus, Vintage, 1955, P. 89
3. P. 196

APPLICATION FOR LICENSE AS A MINISTER

DATE: _____, 197__

NAME: Marjorie F. Ragona TELEPHONE: (617) 524-1727

ADDRESS: 44 Gartland Street, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts 02130

ZIP: _____

1. Indicate the local MCC congregation (Chartered Church) in which you hold official membership:

   MCC- Boston, Mass. For how long? 6 months

2. Indicate the positions or offices held and committees or activities in which you have participated in MCC:

   Exhorter, Boston-Mcc. (See statement of faith.) Dates: October 76- present

   Exhorter, New York, MCC " Dates: April 1975-Sept.1976

   Board Member, New York MCC Dates: November 1974-April 75

3. List below all schools attended

EDUCATION	Name and Location of School	No. of Years Attended	Course of Study General	Course of Study Special	Did you Graduate?	Date of Leaving Mo. Yr.
Grammar School	P.S.169, P.S.115	9	X		Yes	1943
High School	Briarcliff Manor,	3	X	Honors Academic	Yes	1946
Night School						
~~Correspondence Sch.~~	School of Nursing Goldwater Mem. Hospital/	3	R.N.		Yes	1949
College or University	Tulane University	5	B.A. in American Studies ~~Louisiana Teacher Certif.~~		X	8-72

4. Provide below your Employment Record for the past 5 years (List last employer first)

Employers Name and Address	Kind of Work	Weekly Wage	Started	Left	Reason
New England Medical Center 171 Harrison Avenue, Boston, Mass.	Research Assistant	175.00 wk	Oct.76	Still there	
A & R Medical Laboratories 660 Third Avenue, New York	Medical Administrator	225.00 wk	June 73	Feb.75	to collect unemploy.
New Orleans Public Schools New Orleans, Louisiana	Teacher, 4 & 5 Grades	$750.00mo.	Feb.1966	June 73	move to New York
Browne-McHardy Clinic 3030 St. Charles Ave, N.O., La.	Reg. Nurse	$175.00wk.	Summers	1970-73	Summer Employment

UFMCC FORM 74005-1 INCLUDE ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON OTHER SIDE OF APPLICATION

5. What was your religious or church affiliation prior to your membership in MCC? Southern Baptist

For how many years? 12 (See letter from J.D. Grey, Pastor, New Orleans)
If you have discontinued that association, when did you do so? 1973

Why? Moved to New York

6. In your previous church affiliation, were you engaged in any type of Christian ministry, service or activity? Yes If so, what?

Extensive involvement in Christian Education, as teacher, director, etc.

7. Do you now hold any position or credentials with any other religious denomination or body? No If so, Position:

Name of body:

8. If Item 7, above, is "Yes", would you be willing to disassociate yourself from that denomination or body upon being licensed as a minister in UFMCC? If not, why not?

9. Cite the circumstances or situations confirming and supporting your decision to dedicate your life to the professional Christian ministry in UFMCC. Beginning in 1974, I felt called to involvement in administration in M.C.C. Following that I realized more and more that the Lord was calling me to the ministry of M.C.C. I have been an exhorter since April 1975 and have strongly felt used in the ministry and that this is God's will for my life.

10. Do you believe your commitment to include a full-time ministry? Yes

If not, then to what extent?

11. What talents do you feel you can offer to further the goals of the UFMCC ministry? 1. Preaching the Word; 2. Research and Scholarship in the field of Women's Studies; 3. Administrative talents 4. Teaching

12. Have you studied the By-Laws of UFMCC? Yes

13. Are you in agreement with the statement of faith adopted by the General Conference of UFMCC as stated in the Fellowship By-Laws? Absolutely.

14. Would you teach/preach any additional scriptural truth as a doctrine of UFMCC and/or require its acceptance before receiving an individual into membership of the Church or to administer the Sacraments and Rites of the Church to an individual? No.
(If "Yes", explain briefly on the back of this sheet or on another sheet of paper attached to this application.)

15. Explain briefly your understanding of the Sacraments and their observance in the local Church. (See attached sheet.)

16. Do you endeavor at each appropriate opportunity to testify of the Christ and to regularly devote time to Bible study, prayer & meditation? Yes.

17. Do you recognize and accept the responsibility to set an example before others in all aspects of Christian living? Yes.

18. Do you support efforts in the area of social justice (especially with reference to obtaining human rights for gay people) that are pursued within the framework of our Fellowship By-Laws and the traditions of non-violence? Absolutely.

19. Do you tithe to your local MCC congregation? Nearly. Up until this year I have been the sole support of three children.

20. Are you prepared to move to another geographical location, if needed, in order to serve in the ministry of UFMCC? Yes.

    If not, why?_____

21. Will you endeavor to support the international programs and decisions of the UFMCC as adopted and authorized by the General Conferences and implemented by its elected representatives? Yes.

I affirm that the above statements are true. I have read and understand the "Requirements for Professional Ministers" (UFMCC Form 75001).

Signed:_____

TRANSCRIPTS OF COLLEGE CREDITS MUST BE PROVIDED. ATTACH ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT WILL SUPPORT YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AS A UFMCC MINISTER (SUCH AS REPRODUCTIONS OF DEGREES, CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, ETC). SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION TO THE PASTOR OF YOUR LOCAL CHARTERED MCC.

DO NOT RETURN TO APPLICANT**CONFIDENTIAL**MAKE NO PROMISES TO APPLICANT

LOCAL CHURCH ACTION:

PASTOR RECOMMENDATION: ( )YES ( )NO Signed:_____

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: With a full board of ____ persons, a total of ____ have voted to recommend this request for license.

Date:_____ Signed:_____, Church Clerk

FORWARD APPLICATION & ATTACHMENTS TO LOCAL DISTRICT COORDINATOR

DISTRICT ACTION: (Note: All material must be in the UFMCC office no later than June 15th)

DISTRICT COORDINATOR RECOMMENDATION: ( )YES ( )NO

DISTRICT CREDENTIALS REVIEW COMMITTEE (Consisting of District Coordinator as chairperson, all senior pastors of Chartered Churches, and all Ordained Ministers residing in the district): With a full committee of _____ UFMCC ministers, a total of _____ have voted to recommend the granting of a UFMCC license as requested.

Date:_____ Signed:_____, District Coordinator

NOTIFY CANDIDATE THAT HE/SHE (HAS)(HAS NOT) BEEN RECOMMENDED TO BE LICENSED BY UFMCC. IF NOT RECOMMENDED, GIVE SPECIFIC REASONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER PREPARATION. FORWARD APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS TO THE MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS AND AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICES OF UFMCC. IF THE ANSWER TO ITEM 7 IS "YES", SEND APPLICATION TO BOARD OF ELDERS.

UFMCC ACTION: ( )LICENSE GRANTED ( )LICENSE NOT GRANTED

Date:_____ Signed:_____

RETURN APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS TO UFMCC FILES IN EXECUTIVE OFFICES.

SACRAMENTS

It is my understanding that there are only two sacraments observed by Metropolitan Community Churches, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism: In my personal belief structure, baptism means total immersion, and while I would not require this of any applicant, I would strongly urge it as an alternative to sprinkling or pouring for the adult new believer. My reasons for this are twofold: (1) The adult new believer would have a better understanding of the theological symbols employed in believers' baptism. The transference of the symbol of water baptism to the idea of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and to his/her own death of the old person and the arising of a new could be more meaningful in the life of an adult than the simple dampening of the brow with water. (2) In MCC, where the majority of adult new believers have experienced the pain of their own alienation from God and have a real sense of the sinfulness possible in human beings, the need for a stronger symbol than sprinkling seems apparent. To present to human beings a really meaningful symbol of the washed and regenerated life seems to me one of the greatest gifts the church can bestow. Gay people, many of whom have felt degradation and shame for a large part of their lives, can in baptism make a fresh start that can free them from the past and enable them to take up their lives anew -- having buried their old selves and their old sense of guilt, and can rise from the baptismal waters free to walk openly and without fear in liberation and a new commitment to the freeing of all people, including themselves.

Communion: In M.C.C. we are under mandate to provide the Lord's Supper at every worship service. This should be done in the most respectful manner possible, taking into consideration all of the variety of traditions represented in our membership. I would not, however, take on all of the traditional church's regulations and requirements regarding transubstantiation, for example. However, out of sense of caring for those who come from this tradition, we should handle the elements with respect and provide the sacrament as reverently as possible. Communion has become more meaningful for me since being in M.C.C. (It took me nearly a year of attending before I could take communion in M.C.C., primarily because of the difference from the tradition I was accustomed to, and because I had been raised in "closed communion" I did not choose to take communion until I was a member.) I would like to see communion explained better for those who come from pew service traditions and who are not accustomed to our manner of presenting the elements, because I think many of them shy away from what is essentially a totally unfamiliar ceremony (in their terms).

I would also like us to retain the very personal moment of prayer with the communicant -- so meaningful to most of us, and so apparent by its absence when we receive the Lord's Supper elsewhere. I would also like to see our communion provided with joy -- since it represents not only Christ's broken body, but also the resurrection, and the coming again of the Lord.

M. Ragona

SACRAMENTS

It is my understanding that there are only two sacraments observed by Protestant Community Churches, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism: In my personal belief structure, baptism means total immersion, and while I would not require this of any "convert", I would strongly urge it as an alternative to sprinkling or pouring for the adult new believer. My reasons for this are manifold: (1) the adult may actually have a greater understanding of the symbolical meaning involved in baptism. The believer's experience of the symbol of water cleansing so the idea of sin cleansing, burial and resurrection of Christ and to strengthen own deeds of the old, sinful and the arising of a new could be not a sentimental in the life of an adult than an infant as symbolic association of the throw with water. (2) In NC, where the majority of adult new believers have experienced the pain of their own alienation from God and have a real sense of the sinfulness, usually in human terms, the need for a stronger symbol than sprinkling seems apparent. In practice in North Carolina a really meaningful symbol of the washed and regenerated life which is one of the greatest gifts the church can bestow. Many people, many of whom have felt deprivation and shame for a large part of their lives, can in baptism make a fresh start that can free them from the past and enable them to take up their lives anew -- having put behind their old selves and daily old sense of guilt, and can rise from the symbolical waters ready to walk boldly and joyfully into tomorrow and a new commitment to the Kingdom of all people, including themselves.

Communion: In N.C.C. we are under mandate to provide the Lord's Supper at every worship service. This should be done in the most meaningful manner possible, taking into consideration the variety of traditions represented in our membership. I would not, however, take on the small (and) sometimes regulations and requirements regarding communicantship, for example. However, out of sense of caring for those who come from this tradition, we should handle the elements with respect and provide the assurance as very meaningful. Communion has become more meaningful for us since being in N.C.C. (It took us nearly a year of assumption before I could take communion in N.C.C.). Primarily because of the difference from the tradition I was raised in, was accepted in, and I had been raised in "closed communion" I did not expect to take communion until I was a member.) I would like to see communion explained prior to time when some from new service traditions and who are not accustomed to our manner of presenting the elements, because I think many of them may view this as essentially a totally unfamiliar ceremony (unfamiliar taste).

I would also like us to retain the very personal moment of sharing with the communicant. So meaningful to me at or, and also underlined by the phrase when we receive the Lord's Supper elements. I would also like to see communion involved with the sermon, since it represents not only Christ's sacrifice, but also the resurrection, and the coming again of the Lord.

M. Hogan

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FORMS AND STRUCTURES WITHIN METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

The primary task of the church is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All forms and structures within churches should facilitate the delivery of the message. Secondarily, churches should function easily, economically, and in a manner which supports and strengthens the humanity and dignity of all its members. To that end, democratic involvement in self-government as a form of teaching people to govern their own lives, and strengthening their sense of self-worth seems to me the most person-affirming and Christian method of church government.

Within M.C.C., it has always seemed to me that this attempt has been made. From time to time there is an attempt to form ecclesiastical hierarchy, but the overwhelming view of the membership seems to be against this. Because I am essentially in agreement with what I feel to be the majority of MCC members and also because I am deeply committed to democratization of all structures in which I participate as a woman and a Christian, I believe that M.C.C. can best meet the needs of its people through democratic means.

It is my understanding that the By-Laws of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches set forth essentially democratic structures for church government. The membership of the individual churches are charged with the election of their church officers, the Boards of Directors; from these are chosen the church Clerk and Treasurer. The members also are charged with the selection (through their Boards of Directors) of their pastors, who are then elected or not by a majority vote of the members present in congregational meeting. By and large this is a good system. In the interest of more democratic choice, however, I would recommend only one small change. I believe that other

FORMS AND STRUCTURES WITHIN DEMOCRATIC CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The primary task of the church is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All forms and structures within churches should facilitate the delivery of the message. Secondarily, churches should function primarily, secondarily, and in a manner which supports and strengthens the humanity and dignity of all its members. To that end, democratic involvement in self-government as a form of teaching people to govern their own lives, and strengthening their sense of equal worth seems to me the most person-affirming and Christian method of church government.

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It is my understanding that the By-Laws of the Universal Fellowship or Metropolitan Community Churches are formally democratic structures for church government. The membership of the individual churches are charged with the election of their church officers, the boards of directors; from these are chosen the church Elders and Treasurer. The members also are charged with the selection (through their boards of directors) of their pastors, who are then elected or not by a majority vote of the members present in congregational meeting. By and large this is a good system. In the interest of more democratic choice, however, I would recommend only one small change. I believe that other

members, in addition to the Board of Directors, with those additional members being drawn from ongoing committees in the church, as well as the lay ministry of the church (Deacons and Exhorters) might also have important input into the selection of a pastor. Because the committee members are deeply involved in the actual working of the church as it is currently constituted, and because the lay ministry of the church will be called on to work closely with the pastor, their input could be both valuable and important to the smooth working of the individual churches. Boards of Directors, since they are constituted over a three-year period, may have members on them who have grown out of touch with the actual day-to-day mission of the church. Many of them might have become actually peripheral to the working of the church, although still maintaining their Board positions and attending Board meetings. The wider input of information into the pastoral selection process may work to prevent the dissention which seems to crop up unexpectedly in many of our churches faced with an incoming pastor unfamiliar to many of the members.

Delegates chosen by the church members attend the General Conference of U.F.M.C.C. annually. From among the Pastors, Staff Ministers, and laity of the local churches, members of the Board of Elders are chosen who govern the church as a whole between General Conferences. From the Board of Elders are chosen the Fellowship Clerk and Treasurer, as well as the Moderator of the Board of Elders.

Basically, M.C.C. has a functioning democratic system, and it is well-designed and operative.

Commissions and Committees of the Fellowship, however, are not democratically chosen, and it would be most beneficial to the Fellowship at large should these be opened to greater input and participation by members of local churches. Often the members of these committees and commissions are not the best possible choices by experience and interest, but are merely those best-known to the individual

members. In addition to the Board of Directors, with those additional members being drawn from ongoing committees in the church, as well as the lay ministry of the church (Deacons and Elders) might also have important input into the selection of a pastor. Because the committee members are deeply involved in the actual working of the church as it is currently constituted, and because the lay ministry of the church will be called on to work closely with the pastor, their input could be both valuable and important to the smooth working of the individual congregations. Boards of Directors, since they are constituted over a three-year period, may have members on them who have grown out of touch with the actual day-to-day mission of the church. Many of them might have become actually peripheral to the working of the church, although still maintaining their Board positions and attending Board meetings. The wider input of information into the pastoral selection process may work to prevent the dissociation which seems to crop up unexpectedly in many of our churches faced with an incoming pastor unfamiliar to many of the members.

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elders. It might be possible to circularize the local churches and pastors requesting suggestions for members to committees and commissions, since local pastors might well know those within his/her congregation who are well-suited to provide expertise to a particular committee/commission.

My view of the District structure is that it works well when it works, but often breaks down because of the movement into and out of the District between meetings. Smooth transfer of leadership is often difficult when a pastor is called elsewhere -- possibly to another district -- or must needs take leaves of absence, etc. Because of this, I wonder if a solution to the problem of movement by pastors might not be greater lay participation at the local district level. For example, if the District Coordinator is a minister, could not a lay minister or church member be Associate or Assistant District Coordinator? This would facilitate the handling of District matters should one of the pastors in a position of District leadership be called elsewhere. Ministers are, by their calling, much more mobile than are the church members. Certainly the remainder of District offices can be held by laity.

Problematical in many churches are the roles of the lay ministry. While the role of the Deacon is rarely a problem, that of the Exhorter can be a difficult one. Exhorters have a long tradition in many churches, and the spread of church work to areas previously untouched by a particular denomination has been enormously facilitated by the sending out of semi-trained exhorters to do this work. It worked for the Methodist churches during their period of greatest expansion[1], and it has worked well for the expansion of M.C.C. during our early years. Now, however, many dedicated members have felt that a call to the ministry has been experienced, and they would like to put that call to work, but there is no church or study group available for them to lead. It is a time for us to strengthen the educational background of many of these fine

elsewhere. It might be possible to circumvent the local churches and perhaps requesting suggestions for members to committees and commissions, since local pastors might well know those within their/her congregation who are well-suited to provide expertise to a particular committee/commission.

My view of the District structure is that it works well when it works, but often breaks down because of the movement into and out of the District between meetings. Smooth transfer of leadership is often difficult when a pastor is called elsewhere -- possibly to another district -- or must make calls, leaves of absence, etc. Because of this, I wonder if a solution to the problem of movement by pastors might not be greater lay participation at the local district level. For example, if the District Coordinator is a minister, could not a lay minister or church member be associate or Assistant District Coordinator? This would facilitate the handling of District matters should one of the pastors in a position of District leadership be called elsewhere. Ministers are, by their calling, much more mobile than are the church members. Certainly the responsibility of District offices can be held by laity.

Practically in many churches are the roles of the lay ministry. While the role of the deacon is rarely a problem, that of the Exhorter can be a difficult one. Exhorters have a long tradition in many churches, and the spread of church work to areas previously untouched by a permanent ministration has been enormously facilitated by the sending out of semi-retired exhorters to do this work. It worked for the Methodist churches during their period of greatest expansion, and it has worked well for the expansion of M.C.C. during our early years. But, however, many dedicated members have felt that a call to the ministry has been experienced, and they would like to put that call to work, but there is no church or study group available for them to head. It is a time for us to strengthen the educational background of some of these fine

candidates to the ministry. Because of the low economic status of many of our church members, however, many of these cannot afford to enter seminaries, particularly not at the graduate level where courses often range upwards of $300 each, and where denominational support (ours!) is non-existant. Also, because the work exhorters do in the local churches is important to the on-going program of the churches, it is not feasible for all exhorters to move to California for training through Samaritan, which is more economical. Exhorters are left with taking correspondence courses, entering Bible Institutes which operate locally, and taking extension courses at nearby seminaries and universities.

STATEMENT OF FAITH AND CALL

Marjorie F. Ragona

Probably the most difficult thing to put in writing is what one believes, because very often beliefs -- particularly religious or political -- are almost non-verbal. One believes with one's spirit almost without thinking, and accepts many beliefs without trying to express them verbally. This is particularly true if those beliefs have existed from very early childhood and are part of one's emotional being.

I have never had to say, "I believe in God," or "I believe in Christ." There has been no either/or. Both are accepted without there being any alternative. God has been there all along. It is I who has been in touch or out of touch with God.

For this reason, and because I think it will help to explain some of the other things which prompt questions as to why I behave as I do, that it will be better to start this answer as a simple biographical sketch.

My earliest childhood was spent in a series of foster homes and children's institutions. Realize that I was born in 1929 at the beginning of the Great Depression. My parents divorced in 1930, and because my father was given custody of three children, one recovering from a serious bout with poliomyelitis, and had no resources for hiring care, I -- at 10 months of age -- was placed in a foster home. My brothers were institutionalized and I did not see them, except for rare holidays, until I was five. At four, I was sent to the Gould Foundation, a pre-adoption center; and at five I was placed in the Woodycrest Children's Home, joining my eight year old brother. Woodycrest

was a Christian-sponsored institution. I learned to read by sounding out the verses printed on "Bible cards" handed out in Methodist Sunday School. I went to sleep with fifty other youngsters in a dormitory to the sound of a loudspeaker playing "Day is Dying in the West," and awoke to that same loudspeaker playing "When Morning Gilds the Skies."

Since I had never experienced living with my own parents, I had been carefully raised on the idea that God was our father -- and I suppose I took it almost literally. I knew no other. Christ was the beautiful figure on the refectory wall, holding out his arms to the multi-colored bevy of children. He wanted us if no one else did.

At eight, I went to my father's wedding, and after that found myself living at home, being raised by a sternly Calvinist father and a dour Welsh Presbyterian stepmother. God, at that point, became a fearsome, punitive, eternal watcher who knew all, saw all, and promptly told my father. My father was the Methodist-trained assistant pastor in a Dutch Reformed Church -- and God's special messenger, who was to be enormously respected and fully feared. My stepmother's God was a severe and demanding judge, whom one did not disobey for fear of lasting damnation. I was early indoctrinated into the idea that one was permanently, totally lost and saved only if one were part of the elect. I was convinced very young, alas, that I was not and would never be -- nor could I be -- and was thoroughly doomed.

I ran away from home at thirteen, following rape by my sixteen year old brother and his best friend. Somehow, like many women in the same situation, I felt it was my fault, and I was afraid to tell my father. I remained on the streets and in the subways of New York -- a juvenile street person -- for nearly five months. At the end of that time I turned myself in to the missing persons bureau, and was sent to Juvenile Court.

The children's court was presided over by an understanding woman judge, Justine Wise Polier -- the daughter of Rabbi Stephen Wise, one of the great liberal rabbis of the 1930's and 40's. Judge Polier felt that I needed to be taken away from the rigid atmosphere in which I was being raised and allowed a gentler and freer surrounding; she also felt that the religious indoctrination I was receiving was detrimental to my mental health. For the next three years I was surrounded by exuberant Reformed Judaism at the Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls School, a facility run by the Jewish Board of Guardians. I was the only Christian child in the school.* On Sundays, I attended the Lutheran Church at Hawthorne, New York and was received as a communicant there. Some of the high spots of those years were the religious raps between the girls at Cedar Knolls and our young rabbi with the young minister of the Lutheran Church. During those years I was awarded a scholarship to Briarcliff High School and later Briarcliff Junior College (since I was too young at High School graduation to be released from Hawthorne.)

At fifteen, during a vacation at home, I was told by my stepmother (a registered nurse) that there was something "unnatural" about my relationships with women. I had as yet had no homosexual experience. Two years later, my father turned me out of the house (following my release from Hawthorne) because of my "morals" -- I had by then discovered my sexual attraction to women. He and I quarrelled on the steps of the Marble Collegiate Church with me calling him a hypocrite, forever talking about the love of God and showing none. I swore then that I would never set foot in church again. I did not for nearly 10 years.

I entered nursing school at Goldwater Memorial Hospital at 17; it was the only free higher education available to me. My special interest in nursing was in orthopedics, particularly orthopedically handicapped children.

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* A book about this school is called The Boys in Cottage Two.

During the next eight years I lived as many young gays do in New York. I drank too much, went to too many parties, stayed out half the night and got up late for work. I worked as an orthopedic nurse, as assistant medical records librarian at Mt. Sinai Hospital, wrote copy for an advertising agency (during a time when I thought I never wanted to go back to nursing again). And I had a number of lovers, usually older women. At 26, over the ending of a particularly intense relationship, I attempted suicide. I went into psychotherapy -- and remained in it for seven years. In the course of therapy, I realized that I would have to come to grips with my religious beliefs and my feelings about my father, which were deeply intertwined. The Calvinistic God and my father were irrevocably one in my head, and so long as I was out of favor with the one, I was totally lost to the other.

In the course of trying to find myself I took inquirers' classes with the Paulist Fathers, but the instructors teachings about Judaism (which I had learned to respect at Hawthorne) made me reject that brand of Catholicism as a possibility.

Being politically liberal -- no, radical -- I suspected I could be a religious liberal, and attended the Unitarian Church for nearly a year. My deeply ingrained Trinitarian beliefs could not accept the rejection of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

I even attended the Jehovah's Witnesses group for about six weeks, wondering if their doctrines were of value to me. They were not. I made no commitments, belonged to no church, but continued to read and search.

In the course of psychotherapy I discovered a heterosexual side to my personality that had never been explored or expressed. I married at 28, my first child was born a year later, and for the next few years, following this marriage to a much older man, was happy as the wife and mother of two small sons. In 1961, I learned that my husband had terminal cancer of the colon. During my marriage, I was reconciled with my father and his new wife (my first stepmother had died about 10 years earlier).

Following my husband's death, I began to drink heavily. I lost my job with Mt. Sinai Hospital for absenteeism due to drinking. I went into A.A., but must admit that I was one of the people it did not work for -- A.A. meetings merely made me thirsty! Deeply troubled, having been drinking, I was walking up Broadway one Wednesday evening and passed the First Baptist Church on 79th Street. I heard an old hymn being sung, and lonely and longing for some kind of release from my personal anguish I went into the church and sat in a rear pew. "Now I'm Coming Home" was sung as the invitation, and after a long period of pain and isolation in my life, I realized that I could indeed come home to God, everyone can -- anyone can.

Very shortly after that I left New York -- realizing that I badly needed a change of scene -- for New Orleans, Louisiana. I picked up the threads of a relationship with a woman that dated back to my late teens (and which had continued sporadically during my twenties). I began work as an orthopedic nurse at the Browne-McHardy Clinic, where an elderly co-worker convinced me to attend the First Baptist Church. Wondering whether First Baptist Church of New Orleans would be anything like First Baptist Church of New York, I accepted mainly out of curiosity. I did not become a Baptist easily. Baptists had been laughingstock all through my childhood. I had a Dunker grandmother, and her quaint "unworldly" ways were a family joke. However, something in the Baptist beliefs I was hearing Sunday by Sunday touched old memories, and the religious convictions of that old woman began to stand out live and strong. I remembered stories of old Anabaptists and of her German Baptist Brethren church. The Baptist beliefs that had enriched her life were to save and change mine. For nearly a year, I listened as salvation by grace was preached Sunday by Sunday, with a growing conviction that here was a Christian belief that had special meaning for me. I was able to reach through the years of alienation from God and the church, the years of guilt about my implication in my brother's attack, my guilt about my homosexuality, my degradation in alcoholism and the attendant abuse of my sexuality,

and find -- at last -- acceptance by God. Jesus Christ had died for me. My sins were forgiven. I was freed once and for all from guilt and shame. I had experienced God's forgiving love personally, totally, completely in a very certain and strong conversion experience. I was wholer than I had been for years -- possibly ever. I was immersed at age 34. Within months, my drinking problem ceased, never to return, and my life began to take on an order that it had never had. In 1964, I remarried, and realized immediately that I should not have. I was homosexually attracted to an old lover and could not shake it, despite my recent conversion experience. I went through the usual dialogues with God, "If you were going to save me, why didn't you change this, too?" "How can I be a Christian and still be gay?" "Are you testing my faith?" I could not understand how I could go through a complete conversion experience on the one hand and a re-emergence of my homosexuality on the other. God's answer was silence.

After my daughter was born, I met the woman who was to be my lover for the next seven years. Some of God's plan began to unfold. I believe Holy Spirit led me away from work in the medical field into teaching. It was made possible for me to begin work as an elementary school teacher on the strength of my R.N., but with only six hours of college work. God needed schoolteachers who would volunteer for hazardous duty. I was one of the first "cross-over" teachers -- white teachers who would teach in the formerly all-black segregated schools. These schools were in neighborhoods which were undergoing deep racial conflict characterized by attacks on teachers, and on the police by racial militants. The housing project where I worked had literally been under attack, with tanks in the streets. These were the days in New Orleans of the"Howard Johnson sniper" where the situation was very close to armed insurrection. One friend at the Junior High School in the housing project where I taught lost the tips of three fingers when an irate student slammed the door on her hand. It was a dangerous time to be where we were. God, I am convinced, needed us there and led us. It was a good teaching experience. We worked hard, the children learned, and test

scores rose. We were doing what we had been hired to do -- teach. We did not go on civil rights marches -- we worked at it day by day.

The first semesterI began teaching I entered Tulane University and began a five-year program leading to a B.A. and teacher certification. I was graduated in 1973 (after having carried a full program each year in addition to my teaching load). In 1974 my relationship ended. I returned to New York, feeling that it was time for me to come home. I was stunned by the changes in the city. I was even more stunned by the empty churches. When I had left New York in 1962, it was just after the Billy Graham Crusades at the old Madison Square Garden. God had been alive and well and living in New York. During my years in New Orleans I had been attending church with over 2,000 people present in that church <u>every</u> Sunday. I had been living a life centered on a rich and vital Christian experience of salvation of sinners by a loving God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I had watched people walk the aisle for 12 years and I had seen those same people's lives transformed. I had been deeply touched by the Holy Spirit working in my own life and changing it.

It had not dawned on me that back in my home city there had been such a falling away from the church. Within days of my return to New York, the children and I went back to First Baptist Church and we were astounded that that once vital, living church was a moribund remnant of itself, decaying physically, and seemingly decayed spiritually. I was and still am apalled by the state of the church in that city. There were almost no young people in the churches. There was no vitality. There was no joy. There was a stultifying, stagnant ritualism -- an empty religiosity -- that was so different from the religion I had known in New York, and the amazing, grace-filled, Spirit-filled, joyful Christianity I had experienced in the South.

Shortly after my return to New York, I read of the fire in New Orleans which killed the M.C.C. pastor and 12 of his congregation. I decided to come to M.C.C. as a kind of memorial of my own to those New Orleans brothers and sisters with

whom I had had some contact. That was my first visit to M.C.C.-N.Y.

My second visit to M.C.C. was a more startling one. Nancy Wilson was preaching, and trying -- by changing the gender of persons in the Bible passage -- to make the service and scripture more relevant to women, and to point out to the men the women's experience of church-going. I was amazed and impressed that a woman could be speaking persuasively and strongly from the pulpit. Feminism was a new experience for me -- there was no movement in New Orleans, just as there was no Gay Liberation movement in that time. Nancy was my first real contact with a feminist in religion and I was impressed with her desire to open Christianity to the greater participation by gay women in the leadership of the church, including the formal ministry. I was also impressed by the free spirit of worship, the exuberance of the congregation, and by a church which was outspokenly frank about the homosexuality of its members.

I was alienated because so few women were in attendance. I did not come back for months.

When I did return, it was with a new lover, and I wanted to get involved. I had had a lot of experience with the church in New Orleans, beginning the year after my conversion. I had studied, taking advantage of every opportunity made available at First Baptist, taking study courses (formal units of study which contain about 14 hours of classroom work, a short exam, and a certificate for completion) under some of the great Southern Baptists: Clark Pinnock on the Bible as Progressive Revelation, Hershel Hobbs on the book of John, J.D. Grey on Amos. I took courses in Christian doctrine, Hebrews, Hosea, and many, many courses in teaching and administering Sunday Schools and Bible-teaching programs for many age groups. I began as a teacher of five-year olds, and in ensuing years taught young women, elderly women, the retarded, was superintendent of a department with over 50 thirteen year olds (eight of them deacon's sons -- which is the worst can of worms I've ever opened). I was finally asked to work in a formal sense with the teaching program of Napoleon Avenue Baptist Church -- a

brand new church but one which was victim of a changing neighborhood and an elderly clique which drove out all new blood. I taught elementary school age children in the Sunday School, led the teen-age Baptist Training Union, taught the teachers to teach, and did rescue services with the pastor in the decaying back of town area for B-girls and hustlers in the bars to which he was often called when there was a problem. Often he would come get me at night to go off to rescue a child left unattended by a hustler, or to get a drunken woman out of a bar when her husband could not get her to move. If Waif Hamilton were alive, I would get a letter from him, in which, I'm sure, in his old country-boy way he would described the ministry to which he was called and which he often called me. Up front, I Corinthians 11 was observed. Back of town, we all ministered together.

I learned by doing for nearly twelve years, and worked hard at it, rarely missing a Sunday.

At some point during the first year following my association with M.C.C., I began to realize what I thought was God's plan for me. I knew that almost nothing was being done with Lesbian mothers. Gay Liberation seemed to have passed completely over them. I felt that my knowledge of children, education and Christian education and my status as a Lesbian mother gave me particular insight into the needs of these women. I thought, and still think, that God had directed me to New Orleans to re-awaken my Christian beliefs, to lead me to a new understanding of God's love by letting me experience reconciliation through acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for me, and to let me experience the joy of the vital, singing worship of God in rich Southern Baptist tradition, and to return me to New York a changed individual -- to permit me to discover in M.C.C. a place where I could put my gayness, my Christianity, and my feminism to work in one place. I wanted to work in a setting where women could learn and work and study, and experience God in a different and more person-affirming way. Women's experience

of God can be alienating, not reconciling, depending upon the teachings of the church. The worship experience for females may well need to be different than for males (who are taught to keep artificial distance). I believed then and I believe now that God can use me and wants to use me to lead gay women to Christ; women who have been alienated from the church, from God, and from themselves. I believe that God has led me, by my own experiences, to work particularly with those who are Lesbian mothers. These women are not only experiencing all the rejections by society that gay women experience, but are also isolated from other gay women and from the mainstream of the gay community in many ways. The presence of children in their lives adds a complication that their lovers resent and disparage. I believe and will continue to believe that MCC can affect their lives positively, and have a healing effect in the lives of their children, by leading them to a positive affirmation of their homosexuality in such a way that "coming out" to their children will enrich both their lives. The church has a task of teaching and encouraging that with God directing their lives, their disclosure of their homosexuality will not harm their children, but will strengthen the bond between them.

I believe that MCC can do a positive job of providing religious training and teaching for the children of gay parents, and positive role model identification for these children, along with including them in social activities so that children of gay parents will know and understand that they are not "different" in some way from other children, but that many other youngsters are going through what they are, and that it need not be detrimental to them. This is a task we dare not shun. These are some of our community's children and we must not turn them away.

Since I have been in MCC, and particularly during the time I worked with the New York church, we tried to teach this by precept and by example in our Lesbian mothers' group and in all church activities. During that time, I worked with the gay women's community to try to bridge the gap between Christianity and

feminism, through speaking to women's groups, working together with women in the Women's Liberation movement, liaison with "Dykes and Tykes", writing and publication in women's papers, etc., to help women realize that although feminist one does not need to live "Beyond God the Father," but that one can be gay, be Christian, and be feminist -- and one can do all of them successfully through interaction with M.C.C. Since moving to Boston last fall, I have continued that kind of activity, branching out to include also the women seminarians at Boston, Harvard, and Andover-Newton schools of theology. During my year or more with M.C.C. New York, I used my teaching skills to "build up the brethren" by helping provide that church with a vital Bible teaching program.

My formal Christian beliefs, stated as simply as I can, are these:

1. The Bible is the progressive revelation of God to humanity. It was written by humans inspired by God. God makes divine revelation available to us through the Word; the Bible comes alive and speaks to us in situations in which we find ourselves.

   The revelation of God is not knowledge <u>about</u> God; but is God present and acting in us. This God is transcendent and yet personal, having neither sex (is not "he" or "she" -- but as the Zohar expresses it, is "ineffable.")

   God is not provable in human terms, but is found only as known in our lives and expressed in the lives of others in the past, i.e. as history.

2. We are all individuals possessed of free will. We make our own decisions in concrete situations. We are answerable to God for those decisions. Daily, we make existential choices.

3. We are separated by sin and guilt from God. As the Bible says: "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10), "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). We are unworthy to come to God. God, however, loves us and reaches toward us. "But God loved us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Romans 5:8). God acts to draw us God-ward. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us to God, and instruct us in our wrong-doing, and enlighten us as to God's purpose in our lives.

4. One becomes a Christian by taking a "leap of faith" as Kierkegaard expressed it, in accepting the fact that "God so loved the world that we were given the Only-Begotten, that whosoever believes shall not perish, but have life everlasting." (John 3:16). That faith demands a commitment, one either accepts or rejects the sacrificial death of Christ as atonement for one's personal sins.

5. One must give oneself to the often lonely task of following God, for in following in faith one often does not fully understand today what God may make clear tomorrow.

   There is always the possibility that God may never fully make understandable in our terms the reasons for events in our lives, but the faithful commitment is still demanded of us.

6. We recognize our helplessness and must face our weakness and dependency upon God. It is God who has created us. God is Lord of our lives and of the universe, and is so much greater than we that we cannot hope to comprehend in our finite terms God's complete infiniteness. We are created in God's image, not God in ours. We cannot control God by prayer or by bargaining -- yet, God in mercy hears our prayers and accepts our sacrifices and meets our needs.

7. God took the form of humanity in Jesus Christ so that we could begin to comprehend. We can understand because God chose to bridge the gulf between the "ineffable" and us to enable us to receive the message. Jesus Christ became the "Living Word" of God.

8. We cannot understand God by any act of the will or reason. We understand God by faith. That faith can be helped to grow by a better understanding of how God acts in human life. For this reason we preach and teach.

9. We experience God in a personal relationship -- what Martin Buber describes as an "I-Thou" relationship. It is at this point that the question of what is God like, and how God acts is particularly important to women. The "Thou" which God is may be unreachable if that God is understood and experienced in alienating terms.

10. As followers of Jesus, we make ethical choices based on his teachings. Our relationships with other human beings must be within the context of the normative values expressed in the Bible, but those values cannot be followed blindly and must be followed in the spirit of Love taught by Jesus Christ.

11. Righteousness is based upon obedience to God. God speaks to us through the normative values of Scripture: God says, "Thou shalt not..." and "Thou shall ..." Sin occurs when humanity thinks it is good enough to scorn others for their sinfulness, and when we <u>willfully</u> set ourselves in opposition to God.

    We are freed from the law by God's mercy. "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient: All things are lawful to me, but all things edify not." (I Corinthians 10:23). We are obedient out of love for God, not fear. "Perfect love casts out fear." (I John 4:18). Christianity is a way of living under a loving God who directs us in the way to go by the instruction of the Holy Spirit which dwells within us. "God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (I Corinthians 3:10).

12. The demonic exists in the world in the form of evil, but not necessarily personified. <u>People</u> choose to do evil. Corporate evil is larger than the sum of its parts. We can no longer "blame it on the snake." Satan, in fact, does not make us do it; we choose evil over good.

Sadly, systems are often unjust, and it is the Christian's duty to attempt to change them, even at personal risk. This includes ecclesiastical systems. The gay person, therefore, is faced with a categorical imperative to attempt to change an ecclesiastical system which excludes him or her.

The female is faced with a categorical imperative to attempt to change a system which is inherently degrading and exclusive of the equal participation of women. This is often painful, because the process of opening up new ways leads to times of estrangement for those comfortable with the old ways, and raises anxieties which must be dealt with in Christian love. Even so, we cannot turn back.

13. I believe, in faith, that Jesus Christ who was crucified for the sins of humanity, rose again and will come again. In this resurrection, Christ was the victor over sin, evil, and death. I believe in an end time when there will be a final judgment and separation of those who have accepted Jesus Christ and those who have rejected the Christ-event. I believe that those who have knowingly rejected Christ will eventually be rejected.

14. I believe in the resurrection of the body, but that as Paul wrote, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (I Corinthians 15:51,52).

    I do not know what form this change will take, but trust that "eternal life" implies some never-ending limitless being with God in some form understandable in God's terms if not in mine. I fully believe that Hell is separation from God, and is our due only for rejection of God's offer of mercy and reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

15. I believe that we can strengthen our closeness to Christ by participation in the rites and ordinances of the church. We follow in obedience to Christ's command to be baptized, and are baptized into his death, burial, and resurrection: "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:18), and "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism unto death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Glory of the Creator, we too might be created in newness of life." (Romans 6:3,4). That baptism makes us equal in God's sight. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-28).

I believe that my training as a teacher makes me a valuable minister of the gospel by giving me training in the following areas, and their application to the church:

1. Teaching Methods: Applicable to classroom teaching and small group instruction; small and large group activities utilizing a convener or task leader (raps, work groups, recreational activities). Bible teaching,

2. Education in Psychology: (Courses include general, child development, educational, adolescent, abnormal, and social psychology). This produces a wide academic background in counseling individuals, parents and children, particularly in the area of Lesbian mothers and their youngsters. It is also of value in dealing with the adolescent homosexual.

3. Education in Sociology: (Courses include Introductory (2), Urban, Deviant and Social Conflict, Family): This produces an academic background which contains knowledge of demography of cities and produces awareness of changing populations, probable locations of gay ghettoes, etc. Deviance and social conflict brings into great relevance the gay liberation movement and its implications for the church; sociology of the family is again applicable to work with Lesbian mothers and their families, also to couple counseling and working with parents of gays.

4. American Studies Major: (Courses include American History (plus the progressive movement) (4), Social history of the Colonial period, American Literature (2), Black Literature (2), Hispanic-American Literature and Culture (4 courses, in Spanish) -- this produces a wide background in the social, cultural and economic forces in the United States. It also contained background material in the religious history of the United States, from which sprang the social gospel and eventually the gay religious movement. Black and Hispanic literature courses produce an understanding and awareness of the cultural patterns of other ethnic groups.

   World history courses in the time since the Reformation are also applicable to a knowledge of effects on the church.

5. Art, Music, and Literature for Children and the teaching of them, makes me a valuable instructor of Bible teachers for children, and in methods and materials which are appropriate to various age groups and their abilities.

My nursing background gives me a greater understanding of the aged, retarded, handicapped; areas in which many people are unable to work because of fear or revulsion. This makes hospital or institutional visitation, counseling or the consoling of the dying and bereaved less stressful for me and for those being worked with, and provides greater understanding of the psychological and physiological changes involved. While I have not had pastoral counseling, I have had experience with alcoholic and drug-addicted patients; long experience as an orthopedic nurse with the physically handicapped; and experience with ill normal and retarded children, as well as counseling disturbed and disturbing children and their parents as an educational remediation teacher. While in nursing, I was involved in a multi-disciplinary project in Services for the Aging, and aided in the production of the book, Five Hundred Over Sixty, a study of the aging people in the Yorkville and Kips Bay areas of New York City.

I have had the Dale Carnegie and Dorothy Carnegie (women's program) Courses in Human Relations and Public Speaking. Both of these are directly applicable to the ministerial situation, and in some areas are utilized by religious groups, seminaries, etc., to train their students in public speaking. (I was employed by the Carnegie Courses in New Orleans when I had had an accident, broke my leg, and could not do my usual work). I feel that the Lord has given me a talent for public speaking and the gift of preaching, and I feel that one of the contributions I can make to the church is in the preaching of the Word.

Religious Studies: Finances have prevented my being enrolled for formal degree at a theological school, however, I have made application to the Boston University School of Theology, and will be admitted in September 1977. Since I am at a masters' level, this makes the courses expensive (in the range of $300.00 each) and probably will necessitate a five-year program of study. I have had extensive Bible preparation, however, and courses in Christian doctrine. I had one course at the New York Theological Seminary, "The Christian Experience with Good and Evil," and two courses at the Boston Institute for Christian Studies, "Sexual Ethics," and "Interpreting Theology," a base-level course introducing theology. I have read extensively in the fields of ancient history, theology, and church history. I enjoy the research and reading which is involved in the preparation of lectures, sermons, etc. I am planning to take Greek at Harvard in the fall, and have been engaged in a program of teaching myself to read Greek (this is possible because much medical terminology is Greek-rooted and I am familiar with the Greek alphabet and better able to figure out the meanings of many Greek words). I taught a one-year course at the New York church in Introduction to the Bible which used seminary-level texts and materials. I am knowledgeable in the field of theology.

Office and Administrative Skills: I managed the New York MCC church office for nearly a year, taking care of mailing lists, supplies, getting out a mailing of over 1,000 copies of the Mustard Seed monthly, preparing the Sunday worship

bulletins weekly, often writing or adapting the calls to worship and the prayers of confession for other ministers (i.e. the pastor and staff minister), in addition to my own. I am currently employed as a research assistant at New England Medical Center, where in addition to the research duties, I also handle the preparation of manuscripts for publication, do much of the statistical work, keep the office records, patient files, etc. for a research surgeon. I type, edit, proof, etc.

Liturgics: I have structured my own and assisted other exhorters in planning their worship services. For nine months, another exhorter and I carried full responsibility for the Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Since being in Boston I have preached once a month, been responsible for the communion (either here or in nearby towns) once a month, and for various parts of the service nearly every week. I am not a ritualist, but have respect and regard for the needs expressed by the variety of Christian backgrounds found in M.C.C.'s. My own style tends to be more "evangelical" which I see as providing a balance to the many other varieties of styles represented in this area of the District.

Group Leadership: In New York I supervised the Lesbian Mothers Rap Group for well over a year, was the major convener of the Women's Rap Group, which often had 40-45 women present, and since being in Boston have been one of the participants in a mixed rap, speaking on women's issues, primarily. Here in Boston, we are beginning to re-establish the Women's Rap, but weather and time factors have hindered. The value of these groups has been shown at New York, where the number of women present in the rap group was directly translatable in the numbers of women being brought into the worship service and eventually to the membership of the church. It is too early to tell whether this will be the pattern at Boston.

Women's Activities: In addition to working with the rap groups, I have acted as Director of Women's Activities in the Boston church, working with the women who come to the church as counselor, friend, confidante, etc. Generally

women who come to M.C.C.'s go through a period of "There are so few women involved in the church," and often drop out because of discomfort at this situation. The presence of a woman in leadership tends to ameliorate this. We have also encouraged women's activities -- a women's retreat, for example -- as well as encouraging women to participate in mixed activities. Through meetings, dinners, and informal contacts we have befriended and worked with many women both in New York and Boston. My activities in the feminist community help to dispel the idea that M.C.C. is an all-male church, and tend to bring some women to the church who might not ordinarily come. This often includes hard-core feminists, who often begin by stating that the church has done nothing but oppress women. This activity was well-underway in New York, and is just beginning in Boston, where time is now permitting me to reach out more to the women's community, after having spent a good bit of time in mixed activities. I would suspect that my greatest value to M.C.C. would be in my activities in the feminist community, because that takes me to where large numbers of gay women are, and opens up the whole area of discussion of religion for women. There are far more gay women in the feminist community than any other single place -- including bars and other types of social organizations -- and even if we do not bring them to the church, it is a part of the community we must minister to, if we are indeed speaking of ministering to the gay community. In Boston right now, that ministry seems to be most concerned with gay women seminarians at the 9 theological schools here in town, but this may be a rich ministry for M.C.C., since most of these women see themselves eventually in ministry in non-gay oriented churches, and may need M.C.C. as a place to build up their own strengths to enable them to minister to others.

Personal Qualifications: I am 48 years old, have arrived at some level of maturity and begun to mellow a little. In the past year I have worked with and dealt with the topic of anger in my own life, and am beginning to understand this as part of the opening up process from closetedness and acceptance of rigid

role expectations. Many women have gone through similar processes, when one reads the literature coming from the women's movement and women writing in liberation theology. I have realized that there is a point at which anger is destructive of both self and others. However, there is also a point at which anger motvates one to make changes -- in one's situation, one's self, with others, and in the world in which one lives. I am learning to deal with anger more constructively and understand it better, and feel that through this process I can be of some use in helping others who are going through this process. I do not mean to imply, by the way, that I have it totally "beat". But I am coming to a far better understanding of it, and realized how far I had come at the New England Gay Conference when Malcolm Boyd talked about dealing with his own anger -- and upset many people. I realize that this is one of the places that Christians have had problems and where our faith has often failed to help people (particularly oppressed people) come to a constructive place in their lives. It is one of the places which must be healed before the Christian can be made whole.

I have "intestinal fortitude" and the ability to bounce back when faced with odds that seem insurmountable (faith?). I have lived through many things in my life that have taught me "survival skills" which may be of value in the ministry of MCC. I have learned to "shake the dust from my feet and not look back" when a situation seems unproductive, yet not to run from difficulty. I understand managing a slim budget, and running an MCC against financial odds will come as no shock; I have raised three children under similar circumstances.

I believe in egalitarian relationships in the church, among clergy and be tween clergy and laity, and am interested in working to encourage greater participation of lay people in the work of the church. I have good rapport with many of the church members, male and female, and men often seek me out for advice, counselling, consoling, and support. I enjoy working with those whom the church often rejects -- the different. I usually enjoy working and socializing

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after requests — the different. I realize being working and sensitive to

with both men and women, and am not a separatist either by practice or inclination. I enjoy working with the radical activists of the Gay Liberation movements, and often work with them to better relationships between them and M.C.C., particularly many from groups with antagonistic attitudes toward the church -- any church -- including M.C.C., acting as a bridge between radicals and Christians.

I like activity. I enjoy work. I enjoy being around groups of people, yet I enjoy the solitary study and work of preparation of sermons, etc. I set aside daily time for quiet prayer and meditation, usually at my office after work during a break between the day's activity and the evening's. Often this time permits me to recover energy and begin anew. I am a caring person and many people respond to this.

I believe we are created in God's image and God loves us, gay or straight, male or female. I believe God can and does forgive us. I am dedicated to the preaching of God's word. I believe that Jesus Christ died for God's gay children as well as straight ones, and that that message should be whispered to those in closets and shouted to those in the streets. I believe in a God that cares deeply about us, and wants us to care deeply about each other. I am committed to helping women who have become alienated from God and the church to find their way back -- hopefully to a different church than the one they left. I feel called to minister to the needs of people in both spiritual and emotional ways, as pastor and as visible spokesperson for the gay community to the straight community, particularly in liberation activities. I feel that I am God's instrument at hand, faulty tho' I may be, and that I have been called to the ministry in M.C.C. I have tried for over two years to accept that call and to minister. I have made mistakes, am learning from them, and will continue to learn and work for the growth of M.C.C., both in numbers and spiritual strength. By God's mercy and facing God's judgment, this is my statement of faith and call.

GOALS

Primarily the goal of Metropolitan Community Churches is that of the Christian church at large. We are here to preach the word, bring Jesus Christ to the people, and bring them into fellowship with other Christians. To that end, MCC's have a responsibility to provide worship services, teaching and discussion periods where new believers can be instructed in Christian beliefs, and a supportive Christian atmosphere.

Additionally, because the role of the homosexual in our society has been that of oppressed people, we have the responsibility to enlighten ourselves, to strengthen gay people's image of themselves as worthy and valuable human beings, and the necessity to speak to the community at large concerning the liberation of gays from stereotypical roles. We are, then, a part of Gay Liberation.

Third, we are part of theological liberation. As one of the groups of oppressed persons who are re-defining our roles and redefining what the church has to say to us, M.C.C. needs to work cooperative with Blacks, Hispanics, and women to open theology to a more caring and participatory role by minority groups. Our theology must be an open one, our church in touch with the thinking and writing being done by liberation theologists and ethicists within Christianity. We are not an isolated phenomenon -- we are part of a movement, and can be a very vital, living part of that movement. This is particularly true concerning the opening up of the discussion of the nature of God, the nature of human beings, and ethical dealings with people who are different.

STRUCTURES

Our structures need to be as democratic and free as is possible, given the community in which we minister. We have relatively few minor children as members, we have few people who are incapable of making sound decisions. For these reasons, MCC's need to be as participatory as is possible for us to make them. Lay people <u>are</u> MCC, and they need to be involved.

For this reason the participatory democracy of the local church must be protected and encouraged. Boards of directors, committee chairs, lay leaders should represent as wide a group of the congregation as possible. People should be encouraged to know as much about the Fellowship and District levels of MCC, and information should be widely disseminated. Insofar as possible, these lay leaders should be encouraged to actually <u>run</u> the church, with the pastor being there for advice, consultation, and back up when needed. The pastor's role is not that of autocrat, martinet or superior. We are equal co-workers in the spread of Christianity, and lay men and women have much to contribute. The clergy are <u>servants</u> of the congregation and should be there as supporters and facilitators. People learning to govern the church are also learning skills useful in governing themselves. We limit the growth of human potential when clergy take on all of the valuable tasks in the church.

Much of this can be said on the District and Fellowship levels as well. While there is a need to be protective of what is said by us <u>qua church</u>, leadership at District and Fellowship levels must also be trusting of the individual pastors and lay leaders. Participation by as many different people, with as many different talents as possible needs to be encouraged. Our structures need to be open to input from a variety of levels, not merely those nearest the top. Probably the most valuable form of government for us is congregational-associational, and not hierarchichal. I believe that the District Coordinators and Elders should act primarily in an advisory capacity and not as ecclesiastical superiors. I feel this is more in keeping with the needs and capacities of our membership.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS HOPED FOR: THE SENSE OF THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE
By Robert W. Jensen

As most of the ministers of the Northeast District are aware, the women of this district are very interested in finding a way to talk about God in terms which are not exclusively male, and yet which do not necessarily exchange male terminology for female. Is there some way to describe God in terms other than as "Father/Mother", for example, or to avoid exchanging "Lord" for "Lady" (as in "Lord of the Dance" or "Lady of Birth"), or for that matter, any generic term at all.

To this extent, I have been doing a great deal of reading regarding theological language, linguistics, women and language, and related subjects. This book was one of the most important, because Jensen begins with where our formal scientific theological discourse had its beginning -- with Origen -- and traces the language we use to speak about God through Thomas Aquinas to a whole group of German theologians now working in this field.

The book opened up two important ideas to me: (1) The absolute unknowability of God except as "reflection" or "image", seen through the life of Jesus Christ (which I am still not sure I agree with); and (2) All statements about God are analogously descriptive (which I do agree with).

> (God) can be named -- that is, words can be found suitable for talk about *Him* -- only from *His* effects. All speech about God is, therefore, in language drawn from our speech about creatures.
>
> Our knowledge of God from *His* effects can never, therefore, amount to a knowledge of what God is. We can never say: "God is ..." for the word that would appear in the blank would be a generic word, and no such word can be univocally used of God. *He* belongs to no class.[1]

(It is interesting that while saying this, the author has indeed classified God through the choice of pronomials as male being. Such, however, is the nature of theological writings, which generally drive feminists up the wall, since at one count in a paragraph of 12 lines there were 23 references to God as male being and six references to humanity as *Man*.)

Therefore, obviously, all statements about God would have to be formulated as "God is like ..." and then giving some descriptive term which must be formulated as an analogy. God is to humanity as a father is to his children (God:humanity::Father:children) or God is to father as humanity is to children. As for real knowledge of God we can only know God by God-actions. Which, in essence, validates Mary Daly's idea that God is not a noun at all, but rather a verb. We cannot actually know what God is, we can only know God by Godself acting in our lives, and as Jensen says:

> ...the words that we use to speak of *Him*, the "names" we use as predicates of sentences with God as subject, can never name *His* essence. Since our knowledge of creatures cannot give us knowledge of God's essence, our creature-language cannot name it. In this way...we can name *Him* from creatures: but not so that the name points out *His* essence.
>
> But God is ontologically different from creatures; *He* is what *He* is in a different way. Which is to say, *He* possesses *His* attributes in a different way.
>
> We cannot directly speak of God's characters as they inhere in *Him*. For God is not available for inspection. (God) can only be known from *His* effects. Therefore, only the alternative is open -- the analagous use of words.[2]

For us, this means that we can use any meaningful term about God with the provision that we make the statement, "God is like...," rather than "God is..." and we can open up the whole realm of language about the attributes of God without fearing that we are treading upon theologically thin ice. The very structure of theological discourse, imagery and analogy, permit us to describe God in a variety of ways. If God is "like Father," God is "like Mother," for if we experience God as one, we are permitted to experience God as the other -- neither expresses per se the ineffable quality which is God more than the other. Origen, for example, points out that "Father" is merely an image (εικων) used to express the concept that God is essentially goodness and essentially creative (but so is "mother".) Jensen goes on to say that "The break between the ontological mode of God and that of the realm in which we are captive is the echatological boundary between history and the transcendent goal and meaning

of history. If we are to know God it will be across this final barrier." Jensen points out that there is an essential hopelessness in an attempt to talk about God, because we are bound by finite language to experience and express an in finite being.

This book, for me, then is base 1 in our need to find new theological ways of speaking about God in Metropolitan Community Churches. It provides the rationale for our operation on the theological language of our time, and for a restructuring of that language so that it is not sexist, patriarchal, and descriptive of male-bonding, as the church has historically used it, but becomes inclusive, egalitarian, and descriptive of our non-traditional community.

Jensen, Robert W: The Knowledge of Things Hoped For: The Sense of Theological Discourse, Oxford University Press, 1969.

[1] p. 69

[2] p. 75-76

THE WIDER PLACE by Eugenia Price

Eugenia Price's book, The Wider Place, was written for lay people and has its greatest appeal to Evangelicals and others from the more fundamentalist religious groups. I read it at a time when I needed to recover from having spent 10 weeks in a sexual ethics course at the Boston Center for Theological Studies, as part of a task force from M.C.C. and Evangelicals Concerned,who were there to participate in the course and make a "presence" of gay people during the discussion of sexual ethics in this very fundamentalist group. Admittedly,we had been frightened about what that church's attitude to us would be. The course was taught by an extremely rigid young Southern Presbyterian, very concerned with what people "ought" to think and feel about sexual matters. As I sat there, I found myself thinking about fundamentalist Christianity and how little real use it was when people were faced with the really deep decisions of life. We discussed "the right to die", abortion, divorce, and premarital sex, and we discussed homosexuality. Dr. Davis' narrow Christian view was hard to sit through because there were so many places which spoke against the kind of freedom we have learned to accept in M.C.C.

I picked up a copy of this book on the recommendation of Ralph Blair of Evangelicals Concerned, because while we were discussing Evangelicals and Christian Ethics, he pointed out that even within this group there were winds of change ablowing. Ms. Price's book was cited as a good example of this kind of change.

Price begins by describing "the wider place" as a state one achieves in one's particular Christian faith where, having come along the"narrow way" one is free to live in joy, freedom, and a real sense of liberty from the constrictions of what "ought" to be, and what "ought"to be believed; a place

of inner space where we do not fear the disturbances from without.

Price characterizes the fruits of having arrived at the "wider place" as love, joy, peace, patientce, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control -- all of these because the wider place is "safe," and because we are truly safe, we are freed from bitterness, anxiety, unkindness, and compulsion.

Price says of Jesus:

> He was so *free of prejudice* and the *need for personal prestige* and acceptance that he could call the motley collection of disciples he chose. He thought and acted in the freedom of his own identity and purpose.
>
> Because Jesus Christ was God and (hu)Man walking our earth, he was free to *associate with discredited people* and know that his holiness could not be stained. He could treat women, even bad ones, as persons. He could treat social outcasts with dignity.[1] (emphasis hers)

Probably the chapter which had the most meaning for me was entitled, "Freedom from Conformity and Rigidity," because it answered what the whole ethics course seemed to be teaching. Price first quotes Paul: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." ([illegible]) She remarks that this implies an entire renewal of our minds by new ideals and new attitudes. We are tranformed by God. Conformity, to Price, is too easy a way out -- we simply find a group that makes us comfortable and hew to their party line. We need to be free from outer-directing, superficial attitudes, because they are deadening. Price says that one of the sure signs of transformation is the open, humble, teachable mind. Even entering the process begins to transform us.

Another chapter rich in meaning for me was entitled "Free From Meaningless Life," which was intended to answer the nihilistic attitudes often encountered, both in and out of theology. Price obviously does not agree with Camus that life is absurd.[2] True meaning comes from an encounter with God. It is there because God is there, searching for us. And our lives are never meaningless if we are reaching out to others -- not in selfless service -- but because we

are motivated by a real love of others. We will never achieve a truly meaningful life all bottled up and begrudging all we give, but because we are *free to give* and give willingly of ourselves, life truly becomes more abundant. Price quotes from Harold Anderson, calling this "noncoerced abandonment," and marks it as one of the signs of a truly committed person.

Probably the most telling quote in the whole book is this:

> I fear that many people have the Spider-and-the-Fly attitude toward those who do not know Christ. They invite them into their little boxes instead of into the wideness of God's love and mercy.
>
> The most grief-provoking aspect of this cogent comment is that the very Christians who have this attitude are not only the people who have truth to offer those in need, they are almost always the ones who work at it the hardest. They are too often the sincere, tense souls who proclaim the joy of the Lord, but who seldom demonstrate it. They appear to be bound by the very faith which they preach as potentially able to liberate, to set free.
>
> *The tragedy lies in preaching grace and living judgment.*[3]

Price's book is of value to us in M.C.C. because it represents (in the enemy camp, as it were) a point of view we have espoused. Truly loving Christianity does not imprison, it sets people free because God "loves us and wants to give us the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 12:32). It is good to hear it from an Evangelical.

Two other books dealing with Christian ethics from a liberating point of view are Ethics, Issues and Alternatives, which surprisingly enough, was the text for the course mentioned above, although the instructor rarely mentioned it and seemed too ashamed of it to give it credit. From a more scholarly point of view, and more for MCC ministers than laypeople was Faith and Freedom, which included the proceedings of the meeting of the Society for Evangelical Ethics, held in Germany in 1969. A particularly good chapter in that book was by John McKenzie, "Freedom and a Free God", as was a quotation from Karl Barth on the task of the ethicist. Barth's article holds that ethics must help people make decisions, or they will reject the ethic involved, and the ethicist will have been of no value at all.

In all these were three exciting books dealing with Christian ethics, well worth reading. Eugenia Price, by the way, has agreed to be on the advisory committee for Evangelicals Concerned, and has much to offer gay people from the fields of liberation ethics and liberation theology.

Price Eugenia: The Wider Place Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1966.

1. p.19
2. Camus, Albert: The Myth of Sisyphus, Vintage, 1955, p.89
3. p.196

APPLICATION FOR LICENSE AS A MINISTER

DATE: _____, 197__

NAME: Marjorie F. Ragona TELEPHONE: (617) 524-1727

ADDRESS: 44 Gartland Street, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts 02130

ZIP: _____

1. Indicate the local MCC congregation (Chartered Church) in which you hold official membership:

   MCC- Boston, Mass. For how long? 6 months

2. Indicate the positions or offices held and committees or activities in which you have participated in MCC:

   Exhorter, Boston-Mcc. (See statement of faith.) Dates: October 76- present

   Exhorter, New York, MCC " Dates: April 1975-Sept. 1976

   Board Member, New York MCC Dates: November 1974-April 75

3. List below all schools attended

EDUCATION	Name and Location of School	No. of Years Attended	Course of Study General	Course of Study Special	Did you Graduate?	Date of Leaving Mo. Yr.
Grammar School	P.S.169, P.S.115	9	X		Yes	1943
High School	Briarcliff Manor,	3	X	Honors Academic	Yes	1946
Night School						
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~	School of Nursing Goldwater Mem. Hospital/	3	R.N.		Yes	1949
College or University	Tulane University	5	B.A. in American Studies ~~Louisiana Teacher Certif.~~		X	8-72

4. Provide below your Employment Record for the past 5 years (List last employer first)

Employers Name and Address	Kind of Work	Weekly Wage	Started	Left	Reason
New England Medical Center 171 Harrison Avenue, Boston, Mass.	Research Assistant	175.00 wk	Oct.76	Still there	
A & R Medical Laboratories 660 Third Avenue, New York	Medical Administrator	225.00 wk	June 73	Feb.75	to collect unemploy.
New Orleans Public Schools New Orleans, Louisiana	Teacher, 4 & 5 Grades	$750.00mo.	Feb.1966	June 73	move to New York
Browne-McHardy Clinic 3030 St. Charles Ave, N.O., La.	Reg. Nurse	$175.00wk.	Summers	1970-73	Summer Employment

UFMCC FORM 74005-1 INCLUDE ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON OTHER SIDE OF APPLICATION

5. What was your religious or church affiliation prior to your membership in MCC? Southern Baptist

For how many years? 12 (See letter from J.D. Grey, Pastor, New Orleans)
If you have discontinued that association, when did you do so? 1973

Why? Moved to New York

6. In your previous church affiliation, were you engaged in any type of Christian ministry, service or activity? Yes If so, what?

Extensive involvement in Christian Education, as teacher, director, etc.

7. Do you now hold any position or credentials with any other religious denomination or body? No If so, Position:

Name of body:

8. If Item 7, above, is "Yes", would you be willing to disassociate yourself from that denomination or body upon being licensed as a minister in UFMCC? If not, why not?

9. Cite the circumstances or situations confirming and supporting your decision to dedicate your life to the professional Christian ministry in UFMCC. Beginning in 1974, I felt called to involvement in administration in M.C.C. Following that I realized more and more that the Lord was calling me to the ministry of M.C.C. I have been an exhorter since April 1975 and have strongly felt used in the ministry and that this is God's will for my life.

10. Do you believe your commitment to include a full-time ministry? Yes

If not, then to what extent?

11. What talents do you feel you can offer to further the goals of the UFMCC ministry? 1 Preaching the Word; 2. Research and Scholarship in the the field of Women's Studies; 3. Administrative talents 4. Teaching

12. Have you studied the By-Laws of UFMCC? Yes

13. Are you in agreement with the statement of faith adopted by the General Conference of UFMCC as stated in the Fellowship By-Laws? Absolutely.

14. Would you teach/preach any additional scriptural truth as a doctrine of UFMCC and/or require its acceptance before receiving an individual into membership of the Church or to administer the Sacraments and Rites of the Church to an individual? No.
(If "Yes", explain briefly on the back of this sheet or on another sheet of paper attached to this application.)

15. Explain briefly your understanding of the Sacraments and their observance in the local Church. (See attached sheet.)

16. Do you endeavor at each appropriate opportunity to testify of the Christ and to regularly devote time to Bible study, prayer & meditation? Yes.

17. Do you recognize and accept the responsibility to set an example before others in all aspects of Christian living? Yes.

18. Do you support efforts in the area of social justice (especially with reference to obtaining human rights for gay people) that are pursued within the framework of our Fellowship By-Laws and the traditions of non-violence? Absolutely.

19. Do you tithe to your local MCC congregation? Nearly. Up until this year I have been the sole support of three children.

20. Are you prepared to move to another geographical location, if needed, in order to serve in the ministry of UFMCC? Yes.

If not, why? _____

21. Will you endeavor to support the international programs and decisions of the UFMCC as adopted and authorized by the General Conferences and implemented by its elected representatives? Yes.

I affirm that the above statements are true. I have read and understand the "Requirements for Professional Ministers" (UFMCC Form 75001).

Signed: _____

TRANSCRIPTS OF COLLEGE CREDITS MUST BE PROVIDED. ATTACH ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT WILL SUPPORT YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AS A UFMCC MINISTER (SUCH AS REPRODUCTIONS OF DEGREES, CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, ETC). SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION TO THE PASTOR OF YOUR LOCAL CHARTERED MCC.

DO NOT RETURN TO APPLICANT**CONFIDENTIAL**MAKE NO PROMISES TO APPLICANT

LOCAL CHURCH ACTION:

PASTOR RECOMMENDATION: ( )YES ( )NO Signed: _____

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: With a full board of ____ persons, a total of ____ have voted to recommend this request for license.

Date: _____ Signed: _____, Church Clerk

FORWARD APPLICATION & ATTACHMENTS TO LOCAL DISTRICT COORDINATOR

DISTRICT ACTION: (Note: All material must be in the UFMCC office no later than June 15th)

DISTRICT COORDINATOR RECOMMENDATION: ( )YES ( )NO

DISTRICT CREDENTIALS REVIEW COMMITTEE (Consisting of District Coordinator as chairperson, all senior pastors of Chartered Churches, and all Ordained Ministers residing in the district): With a full committee of _____ UFMCC ministers, a total of _____ have voted to recommend the granting of a UFMCC license as requested.

Date: _____ Signed: _____, District Coordinator

NOTIFY CANDIDATE THAT HE/SHE (HAS)(HAS NOT) BEEN RECOMMENDED TO BE LICENSED BY UFMCC. IF NOT RECOMMENDED, GIVE SPECIFIC REASONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER PREPARATION. FORWARD APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS TO THE MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS AND AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICES OF UFMCC. IF THE ANSWER TO ITEM 7 IS "YES", SEND APPLICATION TO BOARD OF ELDERS.

UFMCC ACTION: ( )LICENSE GRANTED ( )LICENSE NOT GRANTED

Date: _____ Signed: _____

RETURN APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS TO UFMCC FILES IN EXECUTIVE OFFICES.

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SACRAMENTS

It is my understanding that there are only two sacraments observed by Metropolitan Community Churches, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism: In my personal belief structure, baptism means total immersion, and while I would not require this of any applicant, I would strongly urge it as an alternative to sprinkling or pouring for the adult new believer. My reasons for this are twofold: (1) The adult new believer would have a better understanding of the theological symbols employed in believers' baptism. The transference of the symbol of water baptism to the idea of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and to his/her own death of the old person and the arising of a new could be more meaningful in the life of an adult than the simple dampening of the brow with water. (2) In MCC, where the majority of adult new believers have experienced the pain of their own alienation from God and have a real sense of the sinfulness possible in human beings, the need for a stronger symbol than sprinkling seems apparent. To present to human beings a really meaningful symbol of the washed and regenerated life seems to me one of the greatest gifts the church can bestow. Gay people, many of whom have felt degradation and shame for a large part of their lives, can in baptism make a fresh start that can free them from the past and enable them to take up their lives anew -- having buried their old selves and their old sense of guilt, and can rise from the baptismal waters free to walk openly and without fear in liberation and a new commitment to the freeing of all people, including themselves.

Communion: In M.C.C. we are under mandate to provide the Lord's Supper at every worship service. This should be done in the most respectful manner possible, taking into consideration all of the variety of traditions represented in our membership. I would not, however, take on all of the traditional church's regulations and requirements regarding transubstantiation, for example. However, out of sense of caring for those who come from this tradition, we should handle the elements with respect and provide the sacrament as reverently as possible. Communion has become more meaningful for me since being in M.C.C. (It took me nearly a year of attending before I could take communion in M.C.C., primarily because of the difference from the tradition I was accustomed to, and because I had been raised in "closed communion" I did not choose to take communion until I was a member.) I would like to see communion explained better for those who come from pew service traditions and who are not accustomed to our manner of presenting the elements, because I think many of them shy away from what is essentially a totally unfamiliar ceremony (in their terms).

I would also like us to retain the very personal moment of prayer with the communicant -- so meaningful to most of us, and so apparent by its absence when we receive the Lord's Supper elsewhere. I would also like to see our communion provided with joy -- since it represents not only Christ's broken body, but also the resurrection, and the coming again of the Lord.

M. Ragona